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THE
BIBLE NOT OF MAN:

OR,

THE ARGUMENT FOR THE DIVINE ORIGIN

OF THE

SACRED SCRIPTURES,

DRAWN FROM THE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES.

BY GARDINER SPRING, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE BRICK CHURCH IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

I certify you, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after
man.—PAUL.

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PRELIMINARY DISSERTATION.

THE FITNESS OF THE TIME SELECTED BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE
FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION.

THE time was long between the promise given to our first parents in the garden of Eden, and the actual coming of the promised Saviour. The patriarchs were looking for him, but his advent was delayed. The prophets were looking for him, and “inquired and searched diligently what, or what manner of time” it would be when He should appear, of whose “sufferings they testified beforehand, and the glory that should follow.” Holy men were watching and waiting; holy women too were looking out in anxious expectation for that highly favored one, who should be the mother of Him who was the “Seed of the woman,” and the “Son of the Highest.”

But the time was still distant. Four thousand years passed slowly away before this long cherished and eager expectation was fulfilled, and He who “thought it no robbery to be equal with God took upon him the form of a servant,” and men beheld his glory “as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” So long indeed was the pro-

mise delayed, that not a few began to despair of its ever being fulfilled; nor were there wanting those who questioned the divine origin of the predictions which foretold his advent. But he who "sees not as man sees," unto whom "a thousand years are as one day, and one day is as a thousand years," had nevertheless been preparing the way as fast as his unerring wisdom saw best. Events had been taking place of high interest; revolution had been succeeding revolution in the earth with a view to his appearing. "When the *fulness of time was come*, God sent forth his Son." It was in every respect the fit season. It was not too soon, nor was it too late, to secure the objects of his incarnation.

The period selected was, in many particulars, a remarkable period; but it was wonderfully fitted to confirm the truth of divine revelation; to wake the nations from their long-continued stupidity and infatuation, and fix their attention upon the design of his advent; as well as to show the power of God in extending his Gospel and kingdom through the earth, in defiance of the powers of darkness, and the stagnant unbelief of men.

In adverting to some of the characteristics of this period, the first that strikes us is, *the extreme corruption of religion and manners throughout the pagan world*. We have no means of ascertaining for how long a period after the creation men retained the knowledge of the true God. Very soon after the flood, and certainly as early as the foundation of the Babylonian empire, they became idolaters.

From that period, the greater part of mankind had been wandering in paths which resembled an inextricable labyrinth, the deadly vapors of which extinguished the faint light that conducted their footsteps. More especially from the time in which God called Abraham out from Ur of the Chaldees, do the Gentile nations seem to have been given over to a reprobate mind. From one false notion of the Deity to another more false, and from one system of foolish and demoralizing observances to another, they rushed into idolatry of the grossest form, until they lost sight of most of their religious traditions; and "because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," had become "Atheists in the world." Phœnicia, Egypt, and Thrace, transmitted their absurd mythology to Greece and Rome, and amid the multiplicity of their gods, the one only living and true God had no place. A selected and favored few there were, in whose bosoms something like the miniature resemblance of this great truth was locked up as an inaccessible secret; while the multitude thought the Godhead "like unto gold, and silver, and stone, graven by art and man's device."

Heathen sages had written upon the nature of virtue and the obligations to practise it, while their own vices showed that they had little knowledge of morals, and were very ineffectual teachers of it to others. "Across the night of paganism, philosophy flitted on, like the lantern-fly of the tropics, a light to itself, but alas! no more than an ornament

of the surrounding darkness." Thinking minds had proposed to themselves questions of importance to the life that now is, and still more important to that which is to come, without being able to give to any one of them a satisfactory answer. Everywhere they saw mysteries; and withal, so dense a cloud hanging over the vast future, that the farther they pursued their inquiries the deeper were they plunged in painful uncertainty. Their thoughts of another life were all confused and obscure. Much was written of "manes, and ghosts, and shades of departed men;" their poets sang of streams that emptied into the infernal regions, of "Elysian Fields," of the seats of the blessed, and of nectar quaffed by the gods; but they were fables got up for the vulgar, and in which the very inventors of them had no confidence. With all her fascinating beauty and tenderness, poetry herself believed not what she wrote; and though in accordance with the spirit of the age she publicly rehearsed the absurdities of her mythology, in her hours of loneliness and reflection she scarcely ventured to echo the strains of her own lyre. The popular and civil theology, established by the laws, "worshipped everything as god except God himself," and gave its sanction to rites in which there was such a mingling of absurdity, lasciviousness, and cruelty, that they may not be recited. Conscience was not so obdurate and silent, as to be prevented from uttering her admonitions; nor yet so benighted, as not to have some strong, though indistinct apprehensions of a terrible recompense. Nor

was reason, in the midst of all her degradation, so absolutely stupefied and brutalized, as not sometimes to assert her own greatness, and grasp realities of terrible import. And the more they did this, the more they both stood in frightful perplexity, lest the labyrinth in which they were wandering should border on the verge of the precipice. The state of the pagan mind, however well informed on other subjects, on the subject of religion and morals was to the last degree degraded and melancholy. Among other facts which illustrate this remark, it may be noticed, that the Senate of Rome itself did not pass the decree for the abolition of human sacrifices, until the consulship of Publius Lucius Crassus and Cneius Lentulus, which was but about ninety years before the coming of Christ. Nowhere is so much information upon this point contained within so small a compass, as in the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. It is difficult to read the description there given without putting a veil upon one's face. The schools of virtue had degenerated into the merest sinks of vice and immorality; their religion itself had consecrated all sorts of crime; while the best that can be said of their gods is, that they were the finest representations which the ingenuity and skill of the sculptor could furnish of the basest of human passions.

Such had long been the religious and moral state of the heathen world; and when the Saviour came it was at its maturity. We cannot delineate the scene, nor tell its darkness. It was the gloom of

pervading error, and almost universal crime. It could not be seen, for it enveloped men like the mist of midnight, and was "darkness that might be felt." It penetrated the halls of science and the schools of philosophy; it shrouded the palaces of kings, threw its dark pall over the chambers of legislation, and overlaid, with its broad mantle, the whole pagan world. Temples, with their shrines, victims, and priests, were wrapped in it; their vestal fires became flickering, grew pale, and were extinguished. Men there had been, and were, who had erected stupendous monuments in honor of the human intellect; but on the relations of man to his Maker, they reasoned and wrote like children. In the darkness that overshadowed them they walked at random; they had an aim, they were conscious there was something to seek after; but they groped about, "if haply they might feel after God, and find him." Here and there, at long intervals, the human mind cast forth a ray of light, but it was fleeting and gone; like the sudden lightning, it served only to render the gloom which followed more intense and appalling. Night is not darker than the dark day which then overhung the earth. If the deep and dire exigences of men could constitute a fitting season for His coming who was to be the "light of the world," the time had come to interpose either for exterminating or saving it. There could not have been a more seasonable period for God's unfolding his own divine method of mercy. The nations could no longer be left in this fearful degradation; the prince of

darkness could no longer be permitted to roam the earth without restraint; the God of love could no longer withhold his Son.

Nor was *the religious and moral condition of the Jewish nation more enviable than that of the pagan world*. The Hebrew race were, from the beginning, designed to be subservient to the introduction of the Gospel to all mankind. Lying as they did upon the borders of Asia, Europe, and Africa, they held a position which signally qualified them to be made use of for this purpose. But by their guilty sympathy with the character of the pagan nations, they became partakers also of their wants and woes. The apostle, after having given the humbling description of other lands, to which we just now referred, applies the same description to the Jews. His epistle was more especially directed to Jews; and his language to them is, "Wherefore thou art inexcusable, O man that judgest, for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest *doest the same things*." The Jews had long enjoyed the knowledge of God, as it was revealed from heaven; they had been educated amid rites and sacrifices that were prefigurative of the great redemption; they had come to maturity under the instructions of a lawgiver, of holy men, of poets, and of seers who had miraculous intercourse with heaven, and whose great theme was the advent of the predicted Deliverer. But they were an arrogant and proud people, an unbelieving, hard-hearted people, and profited little from their distinguished privileges.

Until “the carrying away into Babylon” they were an idolatrous people—nay, “mad upon their idols.” Wise as their system of religion was, and fitted as it was to answer great and important ends, and of divine origin as it was, it was not designed to be the universal, nor perpetual religion. It was but the commencement of those more complete discoveries of religious truth, which subsequent revelations were to supply; a sort of preparatory school, that was introductory to a more perfect dispensation. The apostle, in his Epistle to the Galatians, dwells upon this thought in its relations to the truth we are illustrating. “Now I say that the *heir*, so long as he is a *child*, differeth nothing from a *servant*, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so *we*, when we were *children*, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but *when the fulness of time was come*, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive *the adoption of sons*.”

The Jewish dispensation, at the time of the Saviour’s coming, was an old and worn out economy, it bore the marks of decay and dissolution; it had accomplished its object without making the nation holy: because it had done its work, it was “ready to vanish away.” It “could not make the comers thereunto perfect.”

But it was important that its inefficacy should be *proved*; and the actual condition of the Hebrew

nation was now such as to convince them, and the world, how little it could accomplish. When the Saviour came, their moral depravity was fast advancing to the last extremities of human wickedness. The cup of their iniquity was full. "Never," says their own historian Josephus, speaking of them but a few years after the birth of Christ—"never was there a time since the beginning of the world more fruitful in wickedness." Their national history, from the days of Malachi to John the Baptist, furnishes the most painful and affecting proof that the condition, even of this favored people of God, demanded the interposition of some great Teacher who should speak "with authority, and not as the Scribes." Portions of them were sunk in great and disheartening stupidity; and while the minds of other portions were moved and excited, they were in a state of perplexing doubt, cruel fear, and terrible agitation. For four hundred years, the people who had been wont to enjoy habitual intercourse with the Deity, and to receive frequent and repeated instructions from his lips, had not heard the voice of the God of Abraham, nor had a single messenger from heaven visited them. As a nation, they slept the sleep of death, and seemed to be fast verging towards absolute destruction. The nation was not absolutely broken up; their religious and civil economy were not actually dissolved; but they were "without form and void."

But the Creator's purposes were not completed in this dark chaos. Already was his Spirit silently

and gently hovering over the face of the waters. Rays of truth began to be evolved, which had long been latent, and here and there a few faint beams emerged from the distant horizon. Minds that had been waiting in anxious expectation, caught the coming day as its first light kissed the hill-tops of Judea, and rose brighter until it fell upon its vales, to "give light to them that sat in darkness and dwelt in the shadow of death." Lowly cottages were cheered by it, and John saw it in the wilderness. The shepherds of Bethlehem beheld it as they watched their flocks, and heard the cheerful voices that announced its rising : till, at length, the eastern Magi discovered it in the star that led them to the place where the holy child Jesus was cradled.

It is a fact, in several respects of deep interest, that the age in which the Saviour of men became incarnate, was also *an age of great intellectual vigor and refinement*. This was important, in the first place, for the sake of showing that "the world by wisdom knew not God." One of the leading infidel objections to Christianity is, that it is needless, and that the lights of human reason and the refinements of philosophy are able to accomplish all that Christianity proposes. This question is to be determined by *facts*. It is by appealing to the moral character of our race under the brightest periods of this world's history ; to periods when the lights of reason and nature had made all the discoveries they could make, and when the wise men of this world had taught all,

and more than they knew, that we can form a just estimate of their instructions. Nor is it by any doubtful or tedious process that we are driven to the conclusion, that the most vigorous and best instructed minds the world has known, themselves knew little of the great subjects of which Christianity treats, and which relate to man's eternal well-being. It was an age of unequalled civilization and learning when Christ came : so far as human influences could render them so, civilization and learning were at the zenith of their glory. The palmy days of Grecian literature had indeed become obscured : the age of Pericles and Alcibiades passed away when Greece was reduced to a Roman province. But for a long time after this, Greece maintained a silent superiority over her conquerors ; her arts of peace and her schools of philosophy still gave her the preëminence. Athens was still a great commercial emporium, and the tribunal of the Areopagus, one of the most sacred and reputable courts of law in the Gentile world, was distinguished for its legal research and acumen, and for the weight and impartiality of its decisions. Some of the most learned men in Rome were still educated in Greece. Julius Cæsar was a pupil of Apollonius Milo, at Rhodes, and Cicero himself, during the civil wars of Rome, was a pupil of the same scholar, as well as of Philo, a refugee from Athens and then at Rome. The sons of Roman princes and senators to a great extent, either procured Greek instructors in Rome, or were sent to Greece as the favorite habitation of genius, eloquence, and

fancy, and as the consecrated soil where the arts attained their highest perfection.

Rome, too, then extended her boundaries from the Atlantic on the west, to the Euphrates on the east; and from the Rhine and the Danube on the north, to the deserts of Arabia and Africa on the south. With the exception of Britain soon after subdued by Agricola, the interior of Africa, and the hardy barbarians of the north of Europe, her proud Eagle had become the standard of the world. It was also the golden age of Rome—"the Augustan age,"—proverbial for its preëminence in literature and the arts. Augustus Cæsar, whose personal character might indeed have given him rank with Marius, or Sylla, or Nero, was placed by Divine providence in circumstances which extended his reputation as a warrior, a statesman and a legislator, to the utmost kingdoms, came to the throne about twenty years before the Saviour was born, and then reigned in the splendor of his power. Whatever learning and civilization could achieve for the world, it had the full and unembarrassed opportunity of performing; while the result shows, that, as the intellect of men became invigorated and accomplished, their morals became degraded, and their religion as degraded and vicious as the *human mind can well conceive it to be*. And what more fitting time for introducing the Gospel; for showing that "the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men?" The Scriptures call our attention to this remarkable fact. "It

is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For *after that*, in the wisdom of God, the *world by wisdom knew not* God, it pleased God by the *foolishness of preaching* to save them that believe." It is an observable expression of Divine wisdom, that his own decree for the moral elevation of men should not be carried into effect until "after that" human wisdom had made its full, and fair, and best experiment, and demonstration was had that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Nor is there to be found at the present day, or at any period in the history of the past, more convincing evidence of the insufficiency of natural religion, than is found in the intellectual refinement of that age in which "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

There was another important object attained by the Saviour's advent at this period of intellectual refinement. It was to silence the objection that Christianity *could not endure the scrutiny* of learning and refinement. In introducing the new religion, a religion which, from the simplicity of its rites, the diffusiveness of its spirit, and the extent of its offered salvation, should stand abreast with the wants of the race, it was greatly desirable that it should be introduced at a time when its claims could be thoroughly canvassed, and the evidence of its divine origin could be put to the test by the

severest scrutiny of the most competent and well-furnished minds. It had been an inauspicious circumstance, and a triumph to infidelity not easily silenced, had Christianity, like the religion of Mahomet, commenced its progress in an ignorant and uncivilized country, and in a barbarous age. It had been no difficult matter, in such an age, to have practised the grossest imposition; nor, at such a period, would men have been qualified for that grave research without which no religion ought to be received, nor for ferreting out those tricks of imposture which are attendant upon all false religions. In this respect Christianity stands upon high ground. Her infant Author first announced himself to an age celebrated in story and immortalized in song. His apostles travelled over classic ground. They established churches in the land of Euclid, of Aristotle, and Longinus; of Demosthenes, Solon, and Lycurgus; of Homer and Pindar; of Terence and Varro, Atticus and Cicero, Sallust and Livy, Horace, Ovid, and Virgil. Lands that had given birth to such men, were not likely to shut their eyes upon the gradual encroachment of a religion that counteracted all their previous notions, and that poured contempt upon their altars and their gods. Rather would they scrutinize, with the utmost severity, every item of the evidence by which a religion, claiming to be from Heaven, was supported. Reckoning from the birth of Augustus Cæsar a few years onward, we find a constellation of bright and splendid men throwing their light over the Roman

empire. *Seneca*, the preceptor of Nero, and perhaps more distinguished for his moral virtues than any other heathen philosopher; *Lucan*, the poet; *Quintus Curtius*, the historian of Alexander the Great; *Pliny the elder*, the celebrated philosopher and natural historian, who perished during an eruption of Mount Vesuvius; *Josephus*, the celebrated Jewish historian; *Martial*, *Epictetus*, and *Quintilian*, the last of whom was an orator and critic of great celebrity, was patronized by the emperors, established a school of rhetoric at Rome, and whose work remains a text-book in the modern universities of Europe. These were the men, and such as these, who exerted an influence upon the Roman intellect and character at the period when Christianity began its progress.

It may perhaps be still more to our purpose to remark, that the age was one of great *legal acumen*; and one in which there were not wanting men who were familiar with the laws of evidence, and were trained in the trade of reasoning. The celebrated law of the *Twelve Tables*, a system of jurisprudence which served as the root of Roman law, which was subsequently digested under Justinian, and which is deemed of no small value in modern times, had already been selected and arranged. It may be questioned, whether the mind of man was ever better prepared to investigate the claims of the new religion, and the great facts on which that religion turned, than was the Gentile mind at that age of the world. And this was the period when the Saviour

came. It was when the lights of varied science co-operated with the deeply imbedded prejudices of men against all unwarrantable and ill-founded innovations, that He came who had nothing to fear from the most rigid and unsparing investigation of his title to human confidence.

It may be remarked in the next place, and as an index of bright augury, *that at the time the Saviour was born the world was at peace.* Rome had risen to her proud superiority by conquest. The seven hundred years of the Commonwealth had been distinguished by nothing so much as her conflicts with the nations of the earth, and her internal and civil dissensions and massacres. But by a most kind interposition of Divine Providence, these evils were now suspended, and there was a universal armistice between the great conqueror and all the nations of the earth. Antiochus of Syria, and the Galatians or Asiatic Gauls, had submitted to Rome on her own terms. The second Macedonian war had terminated the kingdom of Macedon at the battle of Pydna, and the Grecian independence was overthrown under the walls of Corinth. Scipio Africanus had terminated the third Punic war by the destruction of Carthage, and the Roman army had been triumphant in Spain and Gaul. The Numidian wars had been brought to a close by Caius Marius, and Jugurtha had been led in triumph to Rome. An effectual check had been given to the Cimmerian and Scythian tribes in the north, the revolt of the Italian allies had been happily terminated by the generosity

of their conquerors, and the pirates of Sicily had been finally suppressed and colonized by the prowess and wisdom of Pompey. Jerusalem had been taken also by the same accomplished warrior; and the embittered contest between the popular and aristocratic parties in Rome had been brought to a close, by the triumphant arms of Julius Cæsar over Pompey at the battle of Pharsalia. The internal dissensions between Octavius Cæsar and Anthony on the one side, and Brutus and Cassius on the other, had been terminated at Philippi; Egypt had been reduced to a Roman province, by the victory of Octavius over the far-famed Queen Cleopatra; and Octavius, now Augustus Cæsar, was called to the throne. The policy of Augustus was a peaceful policy; his object was to effect the stability, rather than the extension of the empire. This emperor died at the advanced age of seventy-five years, between the birth and the crucifixion of Christ, and on his death-bed left his counsel to his statesmen and warriors to make no further incursion upon other lands, but to cultivate the arts of peace. The Cantabrian war was terminated after he came to the throne, and by his orders the temple of Janus was closed. The disturbances in the Bosphorus were now appeased by Agrippa; Drusus was recalled from Germany, and the command of the army in that province intrusted to Tiberius. The ambition of Augustus was gratified by the consolidation of the empire, and all his plans were to augment its splendor by its industry, its literature, its wealth, and its arts. A short period after

the birth of Christ, the war in Germany broke out again ; but at the time of his birth, it was a season of profound peace throughout the Roman Empire. The temple of Janus having been reopened during these disturbances, it was now again closed, under new auspices, and remained shut until Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by Titus. Janus was the god of war ; and as such was before all other gods, even before Jupiter himself. Hence, in the great war between the Latins and the Romans, the formula, dictated by the Pontifex Maximus to Publius Decius when he devoted himself and the legions of the enemy to the gods of death, addresses Janus as the god who was specially invited to go out with them to battle. He was one of the ancient Pelasgian deities. The gate of Janus was the Porta Janualis, one of the gates of the original Rome, on the Palatine road, and an entrance gate into the city. As the city became extended, it was subsequently included within the city itself. His principal temple was that of Janus Quirinus. The statue of this god was set up at the Porta Janualis rather than at any other place, because tradition recorded, that in the battle between the Romans and the Sabines, in the reign of Romulus, he had wrought signal deliverances for Rome on that very spot. It was the usage of the Romans to open the gates of this temple in the time of war, and in the time of peace to shut them. They had been closed but five years since the building of Rome, and once only between the reigns of Numa and Augustus, and that was at the close of the first

Punic war. Rome was shaken by no intestine divisions, and the splendor of her foreign conquests seemed to promise tranquillity for a great while to come. AT THIS PERIOD THE SAVIOUR WAS BORN. Successive wars had agitated the empire for ages; but for twelve years, the confused noise of battle had scarcely been heard.* There was time for thought, for there was tranquillity. It was a fitting season for Him to appear, who was the *Prince of Peace* and the harbinger of reconciliation between God and man. It was predicted of him, that "in his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth."

The mild genius of Christianity has nothing to do with war, save to exterminate it from the earth. The spirit of Christ is not the spirit of blood. Military history is not the history of the true Gospel. "I came not," says its Divine Author, "to destroy men's lives, but to save them." The church of God may be an injured, a suffering, a subjugated community, but she is not a ferocious and warlike community. Of all the causes which obstruct the progress of Christianity, war is the most fatal—the growling faces of the double-headed Janus, the most terrific. There were none of these fears, and none of these distractions, when He descended to dwell with men, who was to subdue their selfish and ferocious passions, and "make wars cease unto the ends of the earth." He who from his high and holy place

* Prideaux' Connexions.—Blair's Chronological Tables.—Encyclop. Art. Rom. Empire, and Arnold's Rome.

asserts the prerogative, "I form the light and create darkness; I *make peace* and create evil;" and in "whose hand is the heart of the king, and he turneth it whithersoever he will," had hushed the jarring interests and the more jarring hearts of men, for the purpose of setting up his kingdom, and giving an impulse to his empire, who "shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks," neither shall they "learn war any more."

"Peaceful was the night,
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of peace on earth began."

In the beautiful language of the greatest of English poets,

"No war, or battle's sound
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uplung,
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng,
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their Sovereign Lord was by."

Another fact of interest is, *that the time of the Saviour's coming was that predicted in the Jewish Scriptures*. He himself was a Jew, and his first mission was to the Jewish people. "Unto you *first*," says the Apostle Peter to the Jews, "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless

you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities." His own commission to his immediate disciples was, to "go *first* to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," "*beginning* at Jerusalem." The sum and substance of all the predictions in the Old Testament, the whole scope and spirit of the entire system of its prophecies, is the testimony it bears to Jesus Christ. Either from the teachings of their own lingering traditions, or from their acquaintance with the dispersed Jews, or from their knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, translated as they had been into the beautiful and fertile language of the Greeks, and of which the curiosity of every scholar would have led him to know something, or from some heaven-imparted intimation, or from all these combined, there was a general expectation, even in the pagan mind, of some great and salutary change in human affairs, through the appearance and interposition of some distinguished Personage, who would become the benefactor of the race. Wise heathen there were, who had expressed the hope that the world would ere long find some relief from the pervading doubts and darkness that had so long rested upon it, in the dawning, at least, of a brighter day. The beautiful Eclogue of Virgil, addressed to the Emperor Augustus, in which he sings of the approaching Golden Age, sometimes seems to the Christian scholar to be almost an inspired prediction, in which this most beautiful of all the Latin poets was carried out of himself, to speak of the new and Divine Messenger who was to be born

under the reign of this favored prince. Different nations of the earth were in actual, though somewhat vague and undefined expectation of some such great and philanthropic Deliverer. Their state of mind seems to have resembled that of the pagans of the Southern Islands in our day, who were disgusted and sick at heart of their own idolatry, and prepared to throw their idols "to the moles and the bats," almost on the first announcement of the true religion. "Men were weary of the past; they had a sort of hope that the time was near when this gloom of ages, this wintry frown would be succeeded by the renovation and loveliness of the spring-time of a new year—a new era, verdant with the hope and promise of a rich harvest.

This vague impression upon the Gentile world assumed the form of more definite expectation among the Jews. Their own Scriptures had not merely intimated a brighter and blander period, but their prophets had pictured it in a perspective, the limits of which their own eyes beheld with remarkable precision. It was not a dream, which fascinated them; for they held in their hands most remarkable and astonishingly minute descriptions of the Person of their expected Messiah, and the circumstances and time of his appearing. The first promise in the Garden of Eden had told them that he would be of human descent, and subsequent revelations indicated that he would be of Hebrew origin. The *time of his advent* was determined by three distinct passages in their own Scriptures.

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, *until Shiloh come.*” This prediction affirms, that the Hebrew state shall not have passed away *until* the Messiah shall have appeared. In many respects, the political and legislative authority of the Jews had passed away *before* the Saviour was born. Judea was a subjugated province of the Roman Empire; her inhabitants were enrolled and taxed by the Emperor Augustus; her laws were made by Rome; and a Roman governor had his palace in Jerusalem, there held his court, and swayed his sceptre over the vanquished Jews. But emblems of authority remained among them still; they were still recognized as an embodied people, until several years *after* the Saviour’s advent, and the actual destruction of the city and temple by Titus. From the period of the restoration of the city after the Babylonian captivity, up to its utter demolition by the legions of Rome, there always had been “some person, or body of persons,” who ruled, or professed to rule according to the law of Moses.”* After this, the sceptre and the lawgiver had departed from Judah forever.

A prediction is also contained in the writings of Haggai and Malachi, in relation to the temple, of the following import: “And I will shake all nations, and the *Desire of all nations shall come.* And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this *latter house* shall be *greater* than

* See Stroud’s Dissertation on the seventy weeks of Daniel.

of the former, saith the Lord of hosts. And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to *his temple*, even the *Messenger of the Covenant*, whom ye delight in: behold he *shall come*, saith the Lord of hosts." The personage here spoken of is the promised Messiah; he was to come before the temple was finally destroyed, and to fill it with his presence and glory. He did come, and did thus fill the temple with his presence and glory; and less than forty years after his coming it was laid in ruins, and has never been rebuilt.

But the most remarkable prediction in relation to his advent, is contained in the prophecies of Daniel. While this prophet was engaged in prayer, the Angel Gabriel was sent from heaven to make to him the following communication. "*Seventy weeks* are determined upon thy *people*, and upon thy *holy city*, to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince, shall be *seven weeks and threescore and two weeks*: the street shall be built again, and the wall even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks, shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are deter-

mined." The person whose coming is here spoken of is the Messiah the Prince, who was to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The time in which he should come was towards the close of the *seventy weeks*, commencing with Jerusalem as restored by the decree of Artaxerxes, and extending to its destruction by Titus.

The Jewish weeks were of two kinds: the one, the ordinary week, consisting of seven days; the other, the extraordinary, or prophetic, consisting of seven years. They had Sabbatic years, by which their years were divided *into weeks of years*, each week containing seven years. If the ordinary computation, making a week to consist of *seven days*, be adopted in this prophecy of Daniel, it is impossible to see how so many great events as are included in the prophecy, could take place within the small compass of seventy weeks of days, or less than one year and a half. It will be recollected that the repairing of Jerusalem itself, and the restoration of the civil and religious polity of the Jews under Ezra and Nehemiah, occupied *forty-nine years*; so that the prophecy remains to be explained by the extraordinary and prophetic computation which counts a day for a year. These seventy weeks, therefore, amount to *four hundred and ninety years*.

This term of four hundred and ninety years begins with the complete restoration of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity under Nehemiah, and ends with their dissolution by the armies of Rome, when

the city was destroyed, the people dispersed, the temple burned, its religious services abolished; and people, and government, and religion, sank together into a common ruin. Now we know with great precision the time when this latter event took place. It was in "the month of September, in the year of our Lord 70, according to the vulgar era." Here the four hundred and ninety years terminated; so that reckoning back from this period four hundred and ninety years, we come to the year before Christ, 420. This ought to be the year when, according to this prophecy, the holy city, the temple worship, and the civil and religious polity of the Jews were fully restored and established, after the desolations of their captivity in Babylon. And this *was* the year of its restoration. It was in the year 420 before Christ, that "Nehemiah, on his second visit to Jerusalem, finally succeeded in bringing the city of his fathers into the state required by the words of the angel. Consequently, the complete restoration and final ruin of the city fully answer to the beginning and end of the predicted term."* According to the terms of Daniel's prophecy, it was not until *after* the expiration of *threescore and two weeks*, or sixty-two weeks of years, that is, *four hundred and ninety-four years* from the restoration of Jerusalem, that the Messiah was to be "cut off;" and it was in the

* I have followed in this interpretation the views of Dr. Stroud. After comparing with some care what has been written on this subject by Prideaux, Newton, Marshall, Faber, and Blaney, Dr. Stroud appears to my own mind to have the preference.

third year of Daniel's sixty-fifth week that he was actually crucified. It was a fitting time, therefore, for the coming of Christ, which thus confirmed the truth of those memorable predictions concerning his advent, and thus established the faith of his people in him as the Divine Author of the Christian dispensation.

There is one more thought which we may not suppress, which, in view of some of the objections of some infidel writers to the Christian argument derived from the rapid and extensive propagation of Christianity, deserves a moment's consideration. It is, that *the time of the Saviour's advent was such, that it is difficult to account for the success of the Gospel without the intervention of Almighty power.* History establishes several important facts in relation to this subject, which demand notice.

The first is, that within the first century of the Christian era, the Gospel had made a progress that is altogether unexampled and without a parallel. In less than a single year after its Founder was accused as a malefactor, and on the very soil where his blood was shed, its converts amounted to nearly ten thousand; in less than two years it overran Judea; and in less than a single century it pervaded Syria and Lybia, Egypt and Arabia, Persia and Mesopotamia, Armenia and Parthia, the whole of Asia Minor, and no small part of Europe.

The next fact is, that when it began its progress the prejudices of both pagans and Jews were alike hostile to it. All the world were either Jews, or

pagans ; all the world was opposed to Christianity. It had to make its way against the intellect and learning both of Jews and pagans ; against the habits of both, than which there is no more dangerous experiment. The political force of both pagans and Jews was also against it. With respect to the Jews, the Sanhedrim was to be opposed ; and they had power both over the moral and physical strength of the nation. Despised as the Jews were by the pagans, and though a subjugated and contemned people, they made common cause with pagans against Christianity. It is a principle of human nature, that when any set of men are selected as objects of contempt, that moment are they joined together as a firm and cemented band. The strength of their union depends upon the greatness of the contempt, or injuries, which they suffer ; they will make sacrifices against a common enemy, which they would find it difficult to make for their individual safety. The Jews when among the heathen were obliged to suffer this contempt, and therefore were bound firmly together. Yet when any of them became Christians, they did so in opposition to the persecution of their own countrymen, as well as the surrounding pagans ; thus proving that the enmity of the human heart against the Gospel is stronger than this strong principle of association. But notwithstanding all this, when an encounter was fairly instituted between the combined hostility of pagans and Jews on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, the latter was the conqueror. There is some-

thing wondrous in this rapid spread of the Gospel in such an age, and something which cannot be accounted for upon ordinary principles.

On the principles by which men are usually governed, there must have been greater intellect on the side of Christianity, than on the side of its opposers ; or there must have been greater bribes ; or there must have been vast inducements addressed to man's sense of enjoyment. But there was nothing of all this. On the contrary, here are unlettered Jews contending with the intellectual refinement, and subtle philosophy of the Augustan age ; preaching Jesus Christ to men who "sought after wisdom," and to whom Christ was a stumbling block and his cross foolishness. Here are unlettered fishermen of Galilee, encountering the pride of Grecian and Roman philosophy, and meeting the scoffs of the lawyers of the Areopagus, "What will this babblers say?" when Paul "preached to them Jesus and the resurrection." Was it probable that the pride of distinction and learning, in that proudest and most brilliant age, was to be subdued by men, of whom it is acknowledged that they were neither wise, nor mighty, but were selected for their work because "God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things that are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things that are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in his presence!"

And what bribes, what inducements were offered them? They were to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods; to forsake all, and follow Christ; to bear his reproach, and follow him to stripes, imprisonment and death.

Nor was the reason of their success to be found in the pliant and accommodating character of Christianity, yielding itself to the claims of Judaism and paganism, and easily becoming amalgamated with either, or both. So far from this, one of the peculiar obstacles it had to contend with was, that its propagators never fraternized with any of their opposers. The pagans did not object to the idols of any nation, provided they would unite in worshipping theirs. The Roman Senate itself expressed a willingness to place the statue of Jesus among their gods; but Christianity was not ambitious of this honor; and for her misnamed intolerance, she became the hated religion. She had and would have no fraternity with the idolatry and vices of the age, but "rather reproved" and stood aloof from all; and was therefore denounced as the unsocial and intolerant religion.

Nor can it be said, as has been affirmed by the historian Gibbon, that their success was to be attributed to the miraculous powers which were ascribed to the primitive church. If these powers were truly miraculous, then were these propagators of the Gospel divinely commissioned, and their message was divine. If they were but pretensions to miraculous power, and a system of magic and deception, they

must have made Christianity weak and contemptible.

Nor may it be said, that their success is to be attributed to the fact that Christianity was a persecuted religion ; and that because persecution increases the interest and zeal of the persecuted party, and rouses the sympathy of the people, therefore it might be expected that it would make friends by its very persecution. Persecution often destroys the interest of the persecuted party. It is contrary to the principles of human nature, to suppose that any man embraces any system whatever because he is to suffer for it. What destroyed the reformed religion in France ? what prevented its progress in Portugal ? what drove the religion that was once introduced into China, out of it ? Persecution. What drove it out from the valley of the Valteline, once in the possession of the Italian Protestants ? In the memorable massacre by the Jesuits, Protestantism was crushed, and disappeared entirely from the valley. Are we not justified in saying, that wherever there is sufficient persecution to put in requisition, and at the same time sustain the confidence and moral courage of men, and not to crush it, there it tends to increase the persecuted ; but when persecution rises higher than this, the effect is just the contrary : the persecuted cannot weather the storm.

There is not an infidel in the world who believes the truth of this objection, or if he does, who believes in his own principles. Infidels never tell a man whom they would draw over to their views, that he

may expect to suffer death for them. We conclude then, that seeing they never use this method of making proselytes, they either do not believe their own argument, or they teach that which is false. The first is contrary to human nature ; the last is consonant with it.

Nor is it true, as the accomplished historian before referred to asserts, that the unexampled success of Christianity in the first ages is attributable to *the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing State in the heart of the Roman Empire*. This union was not formed until three hundred years after the death of Christ, while the most rapid propagation of the Gospel took place during the first century. Alas, for Gibbon ! infidel as he was, a superintending Providence so restrained, directed, and controlled his pen, that he has furnished the antidote to his own poison ; and a careful reader may collect from his own pages, what may easily detect and neutralize his infidelity. Like Balaam, he “ could not curse whom God hath not cursed ;” nor “ defy whom the Lord hath not defied.” It was the complaint of the great enemy of Israel against their false prophet, “ I took thee to curse mine enemies, and behold, thou hast blessed them altogether !” Nothing is more obvious than that, in all those important particulars in which secondary causes could have contributed to the advancement of Christianity, the age in which it began its progress was hostile to its success, and everywhere opposed the greatest obstacles

to its triumph ; nor could any secondary causes overcome the deep-rooted aversion of both Jews and pagans to its claims.

These general remarks gain the more credibility and strength from our own observation of *facts*. Compare the progress of the Gospel among our own Aborigines, among the Hindoos and Chinese, with the so much greater progress of it in the days of the apostles. There are now almost as many advantages in its favor, as there were then disadvantages against it. Yet its progress is less. How is this to be explained except by the fact, that the apostles did not go alone to their work, but were attended by the Spirit of their Divine Master. Christianity was introduced at an age of the world, when it would have been crushed and annihilated, and absolutely still-born, but for its own inherent immutability and the presence and guardianship of its heavenly Parent. The age itself was fitted to show that there was a Divine interposition in behalf of those who propagated it, and therefore that it is itself divine. On any other supposition, than that the men who propagated it were under the direction and patronage of Almighty God, their success cannot be explained.

The time when the Saviour came was therefore remarkably fitted to determine, whether his religion possessed intrinsic excellence and power, and whether its place on the earth could be attributed to mere secondary causes, or to the power of God. It was remarkably fitted to decide, whether the char-

acter of its Founder was entitled to respect, veneration, and love ; whether the witnesses to the facts on which it is founded were entitled to credit and confidence ; whether they were either madmen, or impostors ; whether the doctrines they taught found a ready advocate in the bosom of a world that lieth in wickedness, or whether, if they carried the hearts of men, it must have been owing to the power of God ;—whether the character which Christianity formed, and the effects it produced, were such as constituted the adornment of man's nature, and a virtuous, peaceful, and happy community ; and whether there was anything like trick, or management in selecting the period of introducing it to the world, so that on this account it should be likely to meet with the fewest opposers, and the greatest facility of access. Was it the period when the established religions of the earth favored it ; or when it was patronized by the laws of the land ; or when the minds of men had any professed or secret bias in its favor ? Or was it a period when it had everything to contend with that is human, and when, if it found a dwelling on the earth, it was because it was the offspring of the skies, and had a place prepared for it of God ?

There was most certainly design, and a special Providence, in the selection of such a period of the world for the introduction of the new religion : a religion proclaimed to the race, and to continue to the end of time. It was not a period chosen at random, or accidentally hit upon ; but one, in the ap-

pointment and arrangement of which we may well admire the Divine wisdom. No impostor would have selected it. It was in every view the fit time for the coming of the Great Deliverer. "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God; he is a rock, his work is perfect."

Of the great Saviour it is declared, that "all things were made by him, and *for* him;" and that "he is Head over all things to the Church." Men have wondered why the fulfilment of the promise in Eden was so long delayed; but "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways." We may not now fully see the wisdom of this Divine arrangement, and the manifold relations it then sustained, and sustains still to the honor of the Son of God, and the indications it furnishes that he is indeed the One commissioned to perpetuate a spiritual kingdom on the earth where he was born and crucified. But of this one thing we are assured, that that kingdom will be perpetuated, till the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. The great temple, the laying of the corner-stone of which employed four thousand years, is not to be completed in a day. Its grandeur and magnificence will bear some proportion to those preparatory measures and ages, which were but preliminary to its advancement and completion. It is but eighteen hundred years since it was set on its firm foundations; and it has as yet scarcely begun to grow. A great and glorious kingdom it is, and will go on increasing in extent, in purity, in power, in heavenly splendor,

until "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, shall become a great mountain and fill the earth."

The end is not yet. When the day dawns on which it shall come, it will witness results such as the strongest faith has not fully anticipated. The world of matter was made for the world of mind; time for eternity; the world for the church; all things for the kingdom of Christ. Good for the man that he had never been born, who arrays himself in opposition to this kingdom; who is found without its hallowed limits. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!" Time flies swiftly; one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He testifies, "Surely I come quickly;" and let every heart respond, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." Who will not hail his coming; and with the grateful emotions of the sweetest of all the sons of song, exclaim,

"Come then, and added to thy many crowns,
Receive yet one—the crown of all the earth,
Thou who alone art worthy! It was thine
By ancient covenant, ere nature's birth;
And thou hast made it thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value with thy blood!"

CHAPTER I.

THE BIBLE ABOVE THE INVENTION OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT.

WE maintain that the Bible is an effect superior to any human cause. The first thought by which this position may be substantiated, is *the intellectual character* of this most remarkable volume.

To say nothing now of its moral characteristics, as a production of intellect it is altogether above the invention of the human mind. It is not the style and outward dress in which its thoughts are clothed, of which we speak ; though in these, large portions of it stand above all other writings. Rich and splendid as is its external attire, its heavenly origin is to be sought for rather in the originality, the comprehensiveness, the richness of the thoughts it utters. From beginning to end it is, in this respect, a book containing "wondrous things." So that "the more we consider the highest efforts of the human understanding, the more shall we perceive of its feebleness, and the narrow limits which confine it ; and the more also shall we perceive with increasing evidence, that the Scriptures are the word of God, and not of man."*

* Rise of Polytheism and Pantheism. By James Douglass.

1. In illustrating this general observation, we begin with the remark, that *the views which the Scriptures give of the Deity himself* are altogether beyond the reach of any uninspired mind. Although pure Atheism, or the absolute denial of an intelligent First Cause, finds no support either in the internal constitution of the human mind, or the abundant indications of design in the exterior universe; yet is the knowledge of the only living and true God to be found only in the Sacred Writings. There is nothing which the writers upon Natural Religion have demonstrated more clearly, than the insufficiency, the absurdity even, of those results to which the lights of nature and reason have actually brought men as to the character of the Deity. If the views of those portions and ages of the world which have been destitute of the Bible, may be fairly ascertained from the writings of their philosophers, the enactments of their laws, or their religious rites and usages; not only were their opinions of the Deity loose and undefined, but misshapen and preposterous, and to the last degree stupid. The Bible is the only book which furnishes any definite and satisfactory account of the great First Cause. This great thought, everywhere else so obscure that both the popular and philosophic theology of the pagan world divested the Deity of those properties which are essential to his nature, is the one which gives to the Bible all its meaning, and imparts beauty and power to all its revelations. On opening this Book, you are carried back to those undiscovered ages where

the eternal Deity existed alone ; existed everywhere, and in the possession of all those attributes which constitute him what he is. The image of God is never veiled here : the Book itself is full of God. His character and claims have here a place which no human composition ever assigned to them ; his very existence and supremacy have a place, which is in vain looked for in the conceptions of uninspired men. We know not whether the views of God which are here revealed, are to be the more admired or revered : admired for their beauty and loveliness, or revered for their greatness and majesty. Heathen poets and philosophers have alternately charmed and instructed the world on other themes ; on this they reasoned and sung not like poets, or philosophers.

There are three thoughts which relate to the Divine nature, to which the mind of man could never have attained. The one is the *pure spirituality* of the Godhead ; another is his *omnipresence* ; the third, his *incomprehensible and mysterious Trinity*.

There is nothing in man himself, there is nothing in the visible universe, by which he can make any approximation to the idea of *pure spirituality*. The Divine existence is in this respect altogether peculiar to itself, and such as man cannot adequately conceive. The human faculties do not enable us to form anything like an adequate conception of the spirituality of the Divine nature, now that it is revealed ; much less could they have originated this conception. The same may be said of the *omnipresence* of God. The Scriptures tell us that he fills

all space, penetrates all substances, pervades all minds, and is equally present with each of his creatures, and with all of them at the same time. Now what human intellect could have revealed this truth—a truth so perfectly incomprehensible? What human intellect, unaided by heavenly wisdom, ever penned that sublime passage, “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee!”

And what less can be said of the *Trinity* of the Divine existence? It is a conception that never found its counterpart in the invention of creatures. The human mind actually cowers before it. Not a few, even with the Bible in their hands, are scandalized by this great truth on account of its mysteriousness. Yet, so important is it in the system of truth contained in the Scriptures, that it not only envelopes all its hopes, and enwraps within it all its salvation, but without it the Scriptures are an incoherent system, and absolutely without meaning. Pagan lands know no such Deity; nor is the archetype anywhere to be found in the history of human thought.

2. There are, in the next place, views presented in the Scriptures of the *Divine purposes*, which it is impossible for any uninspired mind to have revealed.

There is the most perfect simplicity in the designs of God, as they are here disclosed ; yet is there a comprehensiveness, a grandeur, an elevation, which are not only worthy of the Infinite mind, but which none but the Infinite mind could originate.

Tradition, taking its rise in a supernatural revelation, gave some obscure intimations of wisdom in the government of the world ; but its teachings degenerated to absolute absurdity. Philosophy spake of a fatalism, which extends its dark and monotonous decree over all things, and gives to blind contingency a sort of universal dominion ; and such conceptions may well be supposed to have men for their authors. The Scriptures disclose those eternal and unchanging counsels of the uncreated Deity, which delineate beforehand all his dispensations, mark out the course and progress of all his operations and government, and trace his entire work from one stage of it to another ; which, from the beginning, comprised whatsoever comes to pass in his proposed universe ; and which, in their progressive fulfilment, constitute the counterpart of the matchless wisdom that formed them before ever the world was. This is the starting point, if I may so speak, of all the operations of the Divine mind ; the threshold of the temple to which the Scriptures introduce us, and where their strong and steady light begins to shine.

In their developement of these comprehensive

purposes they conduct us not only through the successive ages of this lower world, but, leaving these great and measured epochs of time, penetrate indefinitely and interminably into the vast future. They do not fully draw aside the curtain, and tell us what these purposes are; nor do they, save in part, disclose to us the particular reasons of very many of the Divine counsels; yet do they explicitly instruct us that they all coöperate in securing ends with which Infinite wisdom and goodness are satisfied.

Pagan writers knew nothing of such a range of thought as this: the human mind knows nothing of it. It is utterly beyond man's invention; it is a system, an outline of procedure which human thoughts never would have compassed; nor would it ever have been known but for a revelation from Heaven. No creature could thus enter into the deep retirement of God's eternity, penetrate into the mind of God, and tell the world his secret counsels. Search the speculations of all pagan philosophy, inquire at all its oracles, and they speak not, think not of those all-comprehensive counsels, with which the Sacred Writings are so familiar. These counsels have a vastness of extent, a coherency and symmetry, an all-presiding intelligence, which defy the utmost efforts of the human mind. Not only were they a sealed book, the contents of which are unknown to mortals, but no mortal could have known that a scheme so vast had a place in the Eternal mind.

3. The same indications of a Divine intelligence are also discernible in the account the Scriptures

give of the *work of creation*. On this topic the Bible speaks with a definiteness and precision unknown to pagan writers, and compared with which the systems of pagan cosmogony are the wildest conjecture, and as impure and corrupting as they are unintelligible. Human reason has never been able to instruct men how this world came into existence. More than one system of philosophy has sprung up in the world, which endeavored to show that it could exist, and even how it could be made, without God. Strange as it may seem, all the ancient philosophers discarded the idea of *creation* in the sense in which it is generally understood by Christians. They held it to be impossible; it was a received axiom with them, that nothing can be produced out of nothing. On this principle, all that they allowed to the Divine agency was "the arrangement of preëxisting materials, and the moulding of an external, material substance, into the form which it now exhibits in the visible universe." Nor is there any certain relief from this, and other such like metaphysical jargon, but in the simple narrative of the creation as given in the Scriptures. No uninspired pen ever recorded the sentence, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It was a progressive work, and was finished in exact accordance with the plan of its Author. Its progress too was in exact coincidence with those laws of matter which have been found to exist throughout the material universe; the laws then enstamped upon it govern it still. They are "ordinances of heaven;" nor in all the progress

of natural science have any discoveries been made, which are inconsistent with the simple and beautiful narrative given by Moses.

The creation of which the Bible speaks is unique and perfect ; it has no disjoined and irrelevant parts ; there is a place for everything, and everything is in its place ; the less is made subservient to the greater, the material to the animal, the animal to the moral, and all to God. In a moral view, it possesses a beauty and glory which would never have suggested themselves to a created mind. It has its world of probation, and its worlds of retribution and recompense : the former, this material visible system, which is destined to come to an end ; the two latter, the abode of those spiritual and immortal existences, never to pass away. These three worlds constitute a *moral system*, the numberless and various parts of which, while they exhibit strong points of contrast, are yet so related and combined, that each part exerts a reciprocal agency and influence, and all form one great whole. The first chapter in the Book of Genesis is truly a wonderful composition. “ The very first verse is impressed with the stamp of its Divine Original : the reception of it alone would have overturned all the fundamental errors which perplexed the philosophy of Greece, and not of Greece only, but of all countries not enlightened by revelation.”*

Let any one read the Chaldean account of the creation, as given by Berosus ; the Phœnician, by

* Douglass on the rise of Polytheism and Pantheism.

Sanchoniathon; the Egyptian, by Diodorus Siculus; and the Grecian, by Hesiod, and he will be convinced that it is not too much to say, what Dr. Scott has said in his preface to his Commentary, that “in the first page of this sacred Book, a child may learn in one hour more than all the philosophers in the world learned without it in a thousand years.”

4. From the work of creation, let us advert, in the next place, to the account which the Scriptures furnish of *the works of Providence*. There are indications here of intellect that is more than human. There are some remarkable features in the arrangements of Divine Providence, as here disclosed, of which the pagan world was itself ignorant, and which no uninspired mind could have known. There is, for example, a general providence, as expressed in the established laws of nature; so that men in the ordinary affairs of human life may count on these well-known principles of the Divine government, and form their plans with hope and confidence. And there is a special providence, in which the Most High, who ruleth among the children of men, may and does, in perfect consistency with the laws of a general providence, countervail the designs of his creatures by accomplishing his own, and thus maintain and demonstrate his perfect supremacy over all the affairs of men. There is “a wheel within a wheel;” a seeming complexness, yet the most perfect simplicity; for “the Spirit of the Living One is in the wheels.”

There are also the two departments of Equity

and Sovereignty, of Moral influence and Royal prerogative :—this, giving God the throne, and securing the fulfilment of all his purposes ; that, securing the rights of moral government, and rendering them harmonious with a Divine supremacy the most absolute. The claims of sovereignty never interfere with those of equity, while the claims of equity never jostle the throne. Equity and sovereignty run in different, yet in parallel lines, each standing abreast of the other ; both indicating the ways of God to man—both the adornment, the strength of the Divine empire. Growing out of these obvious and beautiful principles, is the truth everywhere taught in the Scriptures, that men are dependent, yet free ; acting, yet acted upon ; fulfilling the Divine purposes, yet responsible. In these revealed features of God's government there is wonderful wisdom—wisdom altogether above the wisdom of creatures ; and we may well say concerning them, “Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?” A late Scottish writer, in a review of the character and writings of the German philosopher Leibnitz, remarks, that “this combination of freedom with Divine and dependent agency includes something without the limits of the human faculties.” And the substance of this acknowledgment has been made by some of the most powerful minds that have written upon this vexed question. These balance-wheels in the moral machinery were invented by a Divine Architect, and are too nicely adjusted to be any other workmanship than his. Thus

to reconcile the apparent inequalities, and seeming incongruities in the Divine government, is not a device of creatures; it is an arrangement which bespeaks a master mind—the Master Mind of the universe. What the wisdom of man has never been able to harmonize by all the speculations of philosophy, the Bible harmonizes. Truths which have ever been paradoxical, and which have shrouded the highest created intellects in darkness—like the seeming incongruous elements which compose the atmosphere—are here adjusted with a simplicity, a skill, that indicate “the unsearchable wisdom of God.”

Nor is the fact to be overlooked, that in the method of God’s providence, as disclosed in the Scriptures, very many of the *reasons* of it are held in abeyance. It is the glory of God to conceal, as well as to disclose: he dwelleth in the thick darkness; his judgments are a great deep; his pavilion are dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. “It were difficult to say, whether his wisdom appears more in what he unfolds, or in what he conceals. The unveiled lustre of his throne would obscure the dim vision of creatures.” To creatures of yesterday, he makes darkness his dwelling-place, if for no other reason than that he dwells in light that is inaccessible and full of glory. Such is not the manner of man. Of all these features of an all-governing Providence, may it not be safely affirmed that no human pencil ever delineated them? This blending of apparently contradictory principles in the Divine government, this “temperature of mingled light and obscurity,”

all so wonderfully fitted to produce in the minds of fallen creatures the most suitable impressions of the Divine greatness and excellence, is the work of God alone. It is just like God. It is assimilated to the revelations he has made of himself elsewhere; it is one of the characteristics of his Word which elevates it above the reach of human invention.

5. But if the Scriptural accounts of these subordinate truths give the Sacred Writings this high preëminence, much more do they claim it from the view they present of the *still greater, and greatest truth they reveal—the redemption of man*. In the centre of the system which this Book reveals, stands forth this great work of redeeming mercy, as the “mystery which was hid from ages,” as the wonder and admiration of all intelligent beings. The Scriptures represent this as the great work of God; the work to which all the works of creation and Providence are subservient; the work to which the past looked forward with eager anticipation, which the present surveys with wonder, which the future will look back upon with overwhelming astonishment. It was not an after-thought, growing out of the disappointed expectation of the Creator in the formation of man; nor was it a thought incidental to the government which he had established over a world of fallen and still responsible creatures. It was the great forethought of the Divine mind; it is the one great thought revealed in his Word.

There are several strong features of peculiarity in this redemption, which remove it altogether be-

yond the limits of human invention. We do not say that it is impossible, or even improbable, that the human mind might have thought of some method of recovery ; but never would it have thought of *such* a method as that revealed in the Scriptures. It would have been a method of arbitrary mercy, without any satisfaction to the violated law ; it would have extended itself to one man as well as another, and comprised the entire race. It would have unfolded no such features, either of the Divine justice or sovereignty, as are unfolded in the Gospel of the Son of God. Had men devised this restoring economy, it had been human like themselves. Philosophy would have theorized about it ; it would have been sanctioned by the wisdom of this world ; but it would never have been that high and wonderful arrangement which extorts the exclamation, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God !" The proposal of a method of recovery for fallen men, to the exclusion of fallen angels, was itself a novelty in the history of the Divine government. Human reason would scarcely have passed by those immortal princes of the Divine kingdom, those once pure and incorporeal spirits of his heavenly court, whose only employment had been to adore, love, and praise his sovereign greatness and goodness.

The facts and principles embodied in this redemption are indeed welcome, but they are altogether singular ; they are glad tidings of great joy, but they were new and unexpected. They reveal high

and marvellous ends—ends that would have been overlooked by men, and especially by impostors.

And we say, almost without the fear of contradiction from infidels themselves, that the *means* by which this redemption was accomplished, were too marvellous ever to have been the subject of the remotest, the most faint conjecture, by the wisest and best of our race. They were strange, they were mysterious means, and comprised truths which could have originated only in the counsels of Heaven. The union of the Divine and human natures in the Redeemer's person, is a fact which would never have been thought of by men. Even now that it is revealed, it cannot be brought within the sphere of human comprehension, and questions may be propounded concerning it which human reason cannot answer. God becomes man; the Creator becomes a creature; the great Lawgiver becomes a subject; the injured, insulted Majesty of heaven, himself becomes the incarnate Saviour!

The *manner* too in which he became incarnate, is not merely mysterious, but has no example, and never can have any imitation. He united himself with that unequalled individual of our race, who was born of a *Virgin*; he was "made of a woman," yet a woman of virgin purity. There is no greater miracle than his *immaculate* conception; and it is a sort of miracle which mocks the invention of an impostor. It was the miraculous *creation* of the human nature of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary. I ask infidels themselves, whether such a fact as this—

a fact so far beyond the uniform laws of nature, that the thought would never once have floated in the impure imagination of man—was not a phenomenon, which it is in the last degree puerile to suppose ever formed a part of fictitious story?

Pagan mythology does indeed speak of incarnate deities; while their fabulous and grossly polluted, and polluting notions of deities incarnate, evince their utter incompetency to have invented the miraculous conception of Mary's child. Every classical scholar knows that it was not thus that pagan deities became incarnate. Their notions of incarnate gods were probably derived from those traditions of which the Scriptures are the origin; but they fashioned them according to their own vile minds.

Nor is this all. The incarnate gods of the heathen were infinitely unlike the man Christ Jesus. He was spotless and pure; a Lamb without blemish, from the cradle to the grave. His vile betrayer, though admitted to all the familiarities of unembarrassed friendship, could not impeach his sinless integrity. Even in the eye of Infinite purity was he without sin. Heathen writers have described no such character; history has none like it; tradition has none; fancy has none; and deception and imposture have none. Poetry and romance, with all their inventive powers, have never been able to portray a character like that which the evangelists so simply, and so true to nature, have given of the Virgin's Son.

Nor need we stop here. If from the birth and

life of Jesus, we advert to the catastrophe of his cross, our convictions are confirmed that it is no human tale of woe. This incarnate One, so holy and harmless, came not to reign, not to be worshipped, but to suffer—to die: to lay the foundation of his kingdom in his own sufferings and death. The fabulous gods and goddesses of the pagan world, have united themselves with men for the purposes of loyalty and dominion; for the tranquillity of pastoral joys, and effeminate luxury; but never to suffer and die.

Nor was it simply to suffer and die, that he became thus incarnate. It was to die, the just in the place of the unjust—the sinless for the sinful—the substitution of the innocent for the guilty. To save the law of God harmless, he submitted himself to the penalty which man had incurred, and “bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” Now I ask, if in all this there be not the most emphatic indications of profound and unsearchable wisdom? Is not this, from beginning to end, altogether a procedure so remote from the apprehensions of men, as to forbid the possibility that it was of human fabrication?

We make the appeal to reason, to common sense, whether it is possible for the human mind to conceive that such a redemption is the design of man. Taking all the objects and parts of it together, is there any greater absurdity than to suppose it of human origin? Is not this a region of thought where the foot of man never trod? Would not the brightest minds the world has seen, and the brightest ages

that have dawned upon it, have been baffled, exhausted, annihilated, in the attempt at such a discovery? Would they not have lived, and toiled, and suffered, and died without it, as the pagan did live, and toil, and suffer, and die?

6. Take another thought. The Bible is *a whole*; it contains no isolated event, no isolated truth is revealed in its sacred pages. From the creation of the world of angelic beings and the formation of man, to the entire apostacy of the one, and the partial apostacy of the other; from the early revelation of the promise in Eden, to the winding up of this great remedial economy; everything forms a part of one great whole, the interest of which is perpetually increasing as the stupendous plan advances to its close. In the progress of this amazing procedure, the glories of creation and Providence are more and more concentrated in the greater glories of this redemption—itself never once deviating from its most prominent and important place in the system of God's administrations. The sufferer of Calvary is ever the master-spirit of the whole; the all-pervading Deity, everywhere and always directing and governing, for the purposes for which he suffered and died. The cross of Christ is ever the centre, from the beginning of time to its close; from the song of the morning stars at the birth of this lower creation, to the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, when this lower creation shall pass away. So that the three worlds of which we have spoken, thus created, thus governed, and one of them thus

redeemed, compose, if I may so speak, the materials of a vast moral drama; the issues of which, though gradually developing, are to be fully developed only at that great crisis when time ends, and eternity begins. In this vast drama, the three glorious Persons in the ever-blessed Trinity—angels, fallen and unfallen—and men fallen and redeemed, are both the actors and the witnesses. The interests involved in it are the highest interests of every immortal being; its conflicts the great moral conflict of the universe; its triumphs the triumphs of truth and goodness. In its progress darkness and error, sin and misery, are gradually retiring and being subdued; death is annihilated, while light, truth, holiness and happiness, become more and more triumphant, up to the time when “the mystery of God is perfected,” and the redeemed and unfallen universe commences a new and eternal era of obedience and praise.

The single fact of the resurrection of the body—that heavy clog and incumbrance of the soul, which the religion of nature and the writings of human reason consign to the dust, which sense locks up in the dark sepulchre, and which natural science scatters to the winds, ingulfs in the waters, sees rarefied into smoke and vapor, and in a thousand combinations entering into and forming a part of the vegetable and animal tribes—is itself a thought too wonderful for the human mind ever to have originated. No wonder that the learned men of Greece scoffed and mocked when Paul announced it in the Areopagus of Athens. Yet the Scriptures tell us, that at

the sounding of the last trumpet, all the bodies of countless generations, all over the earth and from the depths of the sea, shall come forth. Next to Deity assuming his form of humanity, this is the wonder of all wonders.

What scenes will be disclosed when the curtain is drawn upon the opening ages of the coming eternity! The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood; the stars shall fade, and the frame of this lower world be dissolved. The dead shall be summoned from their graves, and a risen world brought forth from the sepulchre of ages, to appear at his bar who expired on the cross.

The attending universe shall stand spectators of scenes, in which they themselves have been and are the actors; the Redeeming God shall be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe; and then the end shall come—the final, the unalterable eternity. The earth shall be burnt up and the heavens dissolved. The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.

O what events are these, to have taken rise in the narrow conceptions of men! What a range of thought is here! Can the Book, which reveals such things as these, be the work of man? Does not the disclosure of such realities carry home to our bosoms the firm and solid conviction, that it is from the revealing Spirit who “searcheth all things, even the deep things of God?” Does it not defy the utmost efforts of our limited faculties? And

if human minds and human pens were employed to make such disclosures, is it not obvious that they were minds and pens "moved by the Holy Ghost?"

7. Another thought which illustrates the position on which we are dwelling, is *the inexhaustible fulness of the Sacred Writings*. We can furnish but a bare suggestion on this rich and varied topic, to be traced out and amplified, as it may present itself in different lights and forms to different minds. The Bible is, in this respect, a most wonderful volume. There is nothing like it in the wide world; no such source of intellectual wealth: itself never exhausted, yet exhausting the brightest, strongest, and most potent minds. A candid mind, that has been prepossessed against it, needs but to *read* it, in order to confess with shame that it has disappointed its prejudices, and that it is enriched with thoughts altogether beyond any other volume.

There are thoughts in this sacred Book, which though perfectly obvious when seen, are not seen on the first or the second inspection, even though that inspection be ever so full. Instances of this kind so frequently occur, that they are continually sources of surprise and admiration even to the most reflecting minds. It is wonderful to observe, what new trains of thought of prodigious interest are often suggested by a single sentence, a single fact recorded in the Bible; a word, a date, not before observed, or not understood, or viewed in some new aspect. The Bible seems, in this respect, almost like en

chanted ground ; or rather, like the embowered precincts of some unearthly world. As we pass over its luxuriant plains, and tread its wide and accustomed avenues, we unexpectedly discover a thousand less frequented paths that open views—views of indescribable richness and beauty—that are new and immeasurable. It is difficult if not impossible to resist the impression, that the light which shines upon us is from no earthly source, but beams from the Infinite Intelligence above us. The mind is never weary in tracing out these opening vistas of truth, except from its own infirmity ; and even when thus wearied, may always recover and refresh itself at unwasting fountains, scattered by the wayside, and everywhere overhung by the dense shadow of the Tree of Life.

We do not find it so with any other book. This is one of the great peculiarities of the Bible ; it is an exhaustless volume. Viewed as a whole, it is like the full-orbed sun ; which though it may have spots on its disk, dazzles by its splendor ; and the more we gaze upon it, and the more its light emanates and is diffused, the more do its resources appear unwasting. Portions of this Book seem deep and unfathomable ; but even its deepest recesses are neither empty nor dark. It is a vast profound, which lies open to the day ; where, though reason's lamp alone were darkness, yet the deeper it descends, it not only encounters no noxious vapors, but, as in a mine of jewels, in every discovered gem it receives back the reflected light of heaven. There is no other book which a

few careful readings of a sound and retentive mind will not exhaust. Yet men there are, who have made this volume the object of their study for half a century ; who have examined every paragraph it contains with repeated and closest scrutiny, and with every fresh perusal have discovered new thoughts, and new causes for wonder and joy. The more deeply they have become absorbed in its pages, the more deep and thorough has been their conviction of its illimitable resources—a conviction uniformly strengthened by their growing acquaintance with its instructions, and by all the effort and honesty, the humility and prayer, they have been enabled to bring to their researches.

There was an humble fisherman on the lakes of Palestine, who wrote a short treatise, so replete with heavenly truth, that Archbishop Leighton, whom Dr. Doddridge calls “that wonderful man,” employed years of intense and delighted labor in illustrating the rich and heart-affecting lessons it contains—lessons, which furnished even the splendid mind of Coleridge with many of those “aphorisms” which form the bases of his far-famed “Aids to Reflection.” Nor do the Epistles of Peter stand alone as exhibitions of intellectual vigor and richness, to which minds unaided by the Holy Spirit never aspired. There is no book in any age, in any country, which can, in this respect, be compared with the Bible. It has very little in common with other books : aside from some of its genealogical records, it has borrowed nothing from them ; while it is the

inexhausted, inexhaustible source from which everything that is truly valuable, on the great subjects of which it treats, is derived.

8. There is one general remark which should be carried along in the mind of the reader, with all the preceding considerations. It relates to *the intellectual character of the writers, and of the age in which the Bible was written*. It was written, for the most part, by men of no extraordinary talents or learning. With a few distinguished exceptions, they were plain shepherds, and humble, illiterate fishermen. But they wrote as never man wrote, on themes of boundless extent, illimitable grandeur, thrilling interest, "and never fall below their lofty theme." They use the language of men, because they are men to whom they address themselves; and because Infinite wisdom and goodness are wont to stoop thus low, do they condescend to all the varieties of human want and degradation, and in so doing seem, to a superficial reader, occasionally to descend to instructions that are unworthy of their elevated objects. Those very portions of their writings with which infidels have so often made themselves merry, were most wisely suited to the exigences of the times and people to whom they were addressed. And moreover, the books which contain them form the first and earliest literary productions in the world. Nor is it a circumstance to be overlooked, that although thus written in the very infancy of letters, and standing alone as they do at the close of the first fifteen centuries after the creation, they should, by the common con-

sent of literary men, hold the acknowledged preëminence. Moses, their author, and whom we affirm to have been divinely inspired, died about fourteen hundred and forty years before Christ ; nor are there any human writings known to us until long after his time. Yet Assyria, Phœnicia, and Egypt were not without science and the arts, and the latter not without hieroglyphical writing. Between the time of Moses and David, there is, I believe, but a single author without the pale of the Israelitish prophets. I refer to Sanchoniathon, the Phœnician historian, who flourished about the time that Gideon was the Judge in Israel. These facts are not, we confess, convincing evidence of themselves that the five books of Moses are of divine origin ; while, taken in connection with the subject matter of these books, their immeasurable superiority to the acknowledged writings of men, and the fact that they claim to be of more than mere human authority, they are of consequence to the argument in favor of their inspiration.

With regard to other portions of these writings, the learned reader will bear in mind a remark of a different kind. The greater part of those which are subsequent to the five books of Moses, were written during those periods of the world when men of gigantic intellect, and high literary fame, appeared in pagan lands. They were men who claim the admiration of succeeding ages, and whose works have come down to our own times. *Homer* flourished in the days of Solomon ; *Hesiod*, not far from the time of Joel, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah ; *Sappho*, during

the time of Habakkuk and Daniel ; *Solon* and *Anacreon*, during the life of Ezekiel ; *Pindar*, in the days of Haggai and Zechariah ; *Eschylus*, *Socrates*, *Zeno* and *Herodotus*, in the age of Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra. The splendid writers of the Periclean age of Greece, and the Augustan age of Rome, all flourished between the period of the later minor prophets and the close of the first century of the Christian era.

There are high embellishments of taste, and unwonted inventions of a creative imagination, in the writings of some of the pagan poets ; there are indeed bewitching fascinations ; but they are not the fascinations of *thought*, of *truth*. Compared with the riches of truth, the luxury of thought, which are to be found in the writings of their contemporaries in the sacred volume, or even with the descriptive powers that are there developed, the Greek and Roman classics are but highly-wrought fables.

But we need not pursue these reflections. The benevolent Creator has endued man with large powers of thought and achievement ; yet are there deeds he cannot perform, and thoughts to which his aspiring mind is unequal. They are not human thoughts, nor do they come under the range of human powers, that are revealed in the Bible. It is not the light of any created intellect which thus develops and brings out the works and ways of God, from the dawn of time down to the setting sun of this earthly sphere. Books multiply, and libraries accumulate through his capacity and toil ; yet is

there this one Book, which transcends the highest efforts of his giant intellect. His severest toil has never penetrated so deep, his loftiest powers have never soared so high, as these illimitable boundaries of uncreated thought. The works of men bear no more comparison to this great work of Infinite Intelligence, than a particle of vapor does to the ocean, or the flight of a moment to eternity. It is at such a vast remove from all the conceptions of created wisdom, that the credulity is not to be envied which looks upon it as a book of imposture, or the invention of uninspired men, or in any other view than as exhibiting the permanent and fixed impression of the wondrous Deity.

In the order of time, we take then our first stand here; and claim for this Book, the tribute due to more than human intelligence. We ask the mightiest intellects of earth to spread it before them, and tell us when and where it has been equalled, and if it partakes not of the infinite character of Him that inhabiteth eternity, and of that eternity which it reveals? We ask them, as they travel over the rich and variegated domain of science and philosophy, if they anywhere find such intellectual riches; and if there be not here heights and depths, plains, fountains, and oceans of thought, the wonders of which man cannot find terms to express, while his highest conceptions of them leave these wonders unexplored?

CHAPTER II.

THE SPIRIT OF THE BIBLE A SUPERHUMAN SPIRIT.

HUMAN authors leave the impress of their character upon their works. No human volume was ever written, that does not itself show that it is human. The best spirit and the purest motives that ever guided the pen of man, have been discolored and tinged by the obvious frailties of humanity. The works even of such men as Richard Baxter, Jonathan Edwards, and Robert Hall, discover the imperfections common to good men; while, at the same time, in reading the productions of such authors, we feel that we are holding intercourse with minds and hearts that were the adornments of their race. We not only find ourselves ranging rich fields of thought, but we breathe the atmosphere of sincerity and kindness; we are refreshed with fruits plucked for us from the Tree of Life. When, on the other hand, we read the works of such men as Voltaire, Hume, and Byron, the first and predominant feeling which arises in our bosoms is the admiration of high talent prostituted to vile ends; we are revolted by their cold and remorseless selfishness and pride. If they interest us, it is because they interest our weaknesses and faults; if they conduct us

sometimes to a clear and mountain atmosphere, it chills us ; if sometimes into low and marshy grounds, it is to diffuse an offensive and infectious miasma ; and if sometimes they invite us to repose, it is under shadows which, like the branches of the Upas, distil poison upon us, and invite us to the sleep of death. The most imposing efforts of intellect are but "splendid sins" where they originate in a wrong spirit, and are not controlled by the love of God and man. Where selfishness and pride, deceit and malignity, are the presiding genius, nothing is more to be dreaded than preëminent intellectual endowments.

It is not more true, that the Bible is too great ever to have been the invention of the human intellect, than that it is too good a book ever to have originated with the human heart. Infinite intelligence is not more certainly the exclusive attribute of the "God only wise," than unmingled, infinite goodness belongs only to him "whose nature and whose name are Love." His intelligence renders him great ; his goodness bespeaks him amiable and lovely. They are not so much the bright, far-reaching thoughts of his mighty intellect, flowing as they do, clear as crystal from the uncreated Fountain, that so much interest us, as the brighter and purer emotions of his wonderful love, flowing as they do, and sparkling as they flow, in rivers of life from that eternal, immense ocean of kindness, which no line can fathom, and which is bounded by no shore.

Deism rests its whole system of unbelief in the Sacred Scriptures upon the fact that God is good ;

while it is from the same premises that, as believers in divine revelation, we deduce the conclusion that they have God for their author. If this is God's Bible, it is not merely a revelation of the mind and intelligence of God, it is a peculiar cast of intelligence; a peculiar spirit; a spirit to which the unaided mind of man never attained; and which, though partially infused into the works of uninspired men, was first infused into this parent reservoir. It is the intrinsic goodness, the inherent loveliness of the Bible, that gives it its preëminence. The spirit of this Book is the spirit of love and kindness, of benignity and good will; it is a disposition which delights in contributing to the happiness of others; which exercises itself in directing men to the true sources of happiness, in gratifying their best wishes, supplying their wants, alleviating their distresses, shielding them from the dangers to which they are exposed, and consulting their highest good upon the largest scale, both for the life that now is, and that which is to come. This is its uniform turn of thought. Goodness is luminous on every leaf; it transpires in every paragraph; it breathes itself throughout the whole; and though to an unintelligent reader, and to a perverted mind, it may sometimes be obscured, yet does this peerless spirit become more obvious with every intelligent and ingenuous view of its pages.

1. In illustrating these general observations we remark, in the first instance, that this peculiar spirit of the Bible appears in its *precepts and truths*.

There is a single affection of the heart which exhausts all its precepts. "*Love* is the fulfilling of the law." Within the comprehensive range of this single affection is found all that is amiable and benevolent; all that gives joy to the bosom that fosters it; all that transforms the world in which we dwell from the chaos which it is, to the paradise which it should be. There is nothing here that is ungenerous and mean, nothing dark and suspicious, nothing selfish and solitary, nothing overbearing and contemptuous, nothing that is implacable and cruel. It is the spirit of gentleness in opposition to violence, blessing in opposition to cursing, pity in opposition to contempt, meekness and loveliness in opposition to haughtiness, patience in opposition to rashness and insult, forgiveness in opposition to wrong and injury, love in opposition to hatred. Here are all those sweet sympathies which not only tranquillize the stormy passions, but, like flowers that skirt the snow-clad mountain tops, show the power of heavenly truth upon the soul, melting away its cold indifference, and cheering the chilled traveller in his wearied way. There is not one among all its truths that does not fall in with this delightful spirit. The design and tendency of the most humbling of them is to produce a spirit of love, and a loveliness of spirit, such as no other truths produce. There is nothing in them that is revolting, save to a selfish and narrow mind; they have no wayward spirit, but all their aim and tendency are to subdue the wayward spirit of men. They form a sort of mould, into which,

when the heart of man is cast, the rough ore is melted and transformed, and comes out with streaks and layers of gold. The mighty Agent in this wondrous transformation records the blessedness of his own work in the memorable sentence, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance." Deceivers there have been among those who professed to be influenced by it; deceived and enthusiasts there have been, carried away by a warmed and overweening imagination, who, like the stony-ground hearers, received the word with joy only for a time; imperfect men there are, and have been, and will be, who notwithstanding its benign influence show that the root of bitterness is not altogether eradicated; while there are millions who, in all sobriety of thought, have felt and proved its power in making them bright patterns of its benevolent spirit. Its object is to impress upon the mind its own image, imbue it with all that is affectionate and kind, and perpetuate a habit and temper of mind, which are as far above this world as the heavens are above the earth.

2. It deserves remark too, that this peculiar spirit is most emphatically expressed in all its tenderness, *when and where it is most needed*. There are periods in every man's history, when the accents of love are winning accents; when the voice of tenderness reaches the deep recesses of his woe; and when, like the harp of David upon the agitated mind of Saul, it charms the evil spirit within the soul. Such is the Bible in those periods of discomfort, depres-

sion and darkness, which are superinduced by man's condition, and which are not a little peculiar in different stages of his moral career. Extending its views far beyond the horizon of human vision, and its sympathies far beyond the sympathies of earth, not only is it a messenger of love, but fits its relief, and times its counsels, to the exigences of human woe.

To the unblest millions in pagan lands, its message is, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else!" To the obdurate and stout-hearted, its message is, "Hearken unto me, ye that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness; behold, I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry." To restless pride, and wearied self-righteousness, and ceremonial superstition, it says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." To the unhappy of every name and age, it proclaims, "Ho every one that thirsteth," let him "take the water of life freely." It watches over the germ of awakened thought and right feeling, and encourages every hesitating and discouraged effort towards holiness and heaven. To the returning prodigal, naked and starved, it speaks of his Father's house, where there is bread enough and to spare, and of the best robe to cover his shame. Over the broken-hearted, who has scarcely courage to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" its language is, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." Over the abandoned and incorrigible, it breathes sighs, and drops tears of compassion; over the peni-

tent, it utters its songs of rejoicing. It wounds to heal; it kills only to make alive; it disturbs the vain hopes of the deceived only to drive them from their refuges of lies to the Refuge where are security and peace. When the wanderer is benighted, it sends out its light and truth, and leads him in a plain path: if he is surrounded by enemies, it sounds its note of alarm, and spreads around him its protecting shield; if he slumber, it wakes him; and if he stumbles and falls, the Angel of its Covenant carries him in his arms, and the Shepherd of Israel folds him in his bosom. It tells the tempted of a "great High Priest, touched with the feeling of their infirmities;" to the afflicted it speaks of "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory," wrought out by "their light afflictions, which are but for a moment;" to the dying, it speaks of an "house not made with hands," when the "earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved;" while, in view of an assembled universe and the last judgment, it reveals the sentence to all who listen to its counsels, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

And is such a spirit the spirit of imposture? Is such a Book the work of man? Has it not counsels for the wretched which the world does not know; and when, for all this world can proffer, everything around them were a dreary waste? Is not such a spirit a novel spirit; so novel as never to have been known until it was revealed from heaven—so novel, so unearthly, that the original model of it

finds no place in the imaginations of men, and only in the counsels of heavenly love?

3. In perfect accordance with this spirit is *the spirit of those institutions which this Book establishes*. They are all institutions of unearthly kindness. Where they exist in their Scriptural purity, they express a purely benevolent design, and exert an influence that is purely benevolent. The message ushered by its ministry is "peace on earth and good will to men;"—"peace, like the dew of Hermon, and love, like the holy oil which consecrated God's high priest." The world could not live without its Sabbath; yet benighted as it is, and wearied and wasted by its moral vassalage, the light and emancipation of such a day of rest would never have entered into its wisest inventions. Its ordinances are the token of Heaven's covenanted mercy, and the pledge of love that is unearthly; they breathe the spirit of love—the fervency and strength of love: the ardor of God's love to man—the reflected love of man to God—the reciprocal love of man to man! They arrest attention, and strike with awe as symbols of love.

That visible community to which the Bible has given rise among men, all eating the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink; all professing one faith, one calling, one hope; is no human device. The public and distinct association of all those who profess to be governed by the principles of the Bible, most certainly forms a peculiarity in human history. There are other associations among

men, bound together by common principles and pursuing common objects: they are not unknown to false religions; but there are none that profess to be governed by love to God and love to one another, as the essential basis of their union and fellowship. However separated by time and place, custom and usage, so far as they are true to their profession, they have all been made to "drink into the same spirit." They have "an unction from the Holy One," the fragrance of which is "as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed," where, like flowers cherished by heaven's dews and sun, they imingle and increase their beauty; and where

"Lebanon, with all its trees,
Yields not a comely sight as these."

There is no stronger, and no sweeter bond, than that which binds minds and hearts that are thus governed by the principles and spirit of this holy Book. The contention and strife of wicked nations and wicked men, have no place here. This heavenly spirit would soften the savage sternness of earth, eradicate its barbarism and ferocity, and transform its tragic scenes of wretchedness and suffering, into scenes on which the eye of Infinite love might look down with gratified and complacent smiles. This is the great principle of all Christian association; it is one which would render the life of man here below "as the days of heaven upon earth," when the triumphs of love shall be celebrated,

"Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
As from blest voices uttering joy."

These institutions are all remarkable features of the Bible. The very existence and design of them indicate a spirit that is superhuman ; and, were there no other, would themselves alone be proof of the divine origin of Christianity.

4. Still greater emphasis will be given to the preceding considerations by the fact, that the spirit of kindness, expressed in the Bible, *flows out towards all classes of the human family*. There are classes that are neglected and depressed by all false religions.

Woman, under the influence of every religion in the world, save that revealed in the Scriptures, instead of being the loved and attached companion of man—a helper, meet for his labors, trials, joys, and immortality—is his servant, and deemed fitting and worthy only to minister to his wants and passions. Instead of being entitled to that place in his affections, that honorable position in society which belongs to her, she is the dishonored portion of the race. Instead of being its ornament and crown, and designed by her beauty, loveliness, weakness, and shrinking delicacy, to influence, charm, soften, purify, and elevate the stronger and coarser sex, she is excluded from this honorable and elevating intercourse, and made the corrupter of human society. In lands not a few, she forms no constituent part of the domestic circle ; she is even denied her immortality ; her birth is bewailed as a misfortune, and her death hailed with rejoicing ; and if she is allowed to survive her minority, it is to immolate herself on the funeral pile of her husband,

or become the universal scorn even of her own children. I need not dwell on the fact, that this is no part of the spirit of the Bible.

It is a remarkable feature of the Bible also, that it has peculiar respect to *little children and the rising generation*. Both under the Old and New Testaments, its great designs of mercy are carried into effect, by its effective solicitude and tenderness towards the young. It is out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, that its Author would perfect praise. Next to the garden and the cross, there is not a more affecting or characteristic symbol of Christianity, than the scene where the Saviour took little children in his arms and blessed them. How different is this from the brutal negligence, and horrid rites, and practised infanticide of paganism! "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven!" Did the voice of earth ever utter a sentence like this? and is it not a proof of Heaven's own tenderness?

We might expatiate largely also, on the benign influence of the Bible upon that class of men who by crime, or war, or cupidity, become the slaves of their fellow men. The slavery of the Bible, in its worst form, is a very different thing from the slavery of pagan and anti-Christian lands. It can scarcely deserve to be called slavery; nor is there any doubt, that in the same measure in which the principles and spirit of the Bible are imbibed, the yoke of human bondage will melt away, and every form of human oppression cease. "There is no respect of persons with God."

This Book is *throughout the friend of the poor*. In this particular, there is a marked difference between the Bible and all other systems of religious faith and duty. Plato makes the strange remark, that "it is impossible to make God known *to all*." "All pure and spiritual religion," says Neander, "was considered as the peculiar possession of a *small number*; it seemed impossible to communicate this knowledge to the *lower classes*." False religions impoverish the poor by their severe exactions. One of the great causes of poverty and suffering in the mass of the community in pagan lands, is the intolerable burden of their religious systems; while it is not less true that the poverty and distress of the lower classes under our own observation, are to be attributed, in no small degree, to the vast amount of property wrung from them by a corrupted and false religion. Nor is this all. The poor, the sick, the aged, are they whose blood stains the altars of false religions, and who are ordinarily selected as the sacrifices to idol gods. How different is all this from the spirit of that Book which teaches us, that "the rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the Maker of them all;" that he is "a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress;" that he "vindicates the poor of the people, and saves the children of the needy;" that "to the poor the Gospel is preached," and that "God hath chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised." The spirit of the Bible is in this particular of high origin; it

was born in heaven and trained to deeds of mercy. It has counsels for the throne—for the prison it has consolation. "I was sick, and ye visited me ; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." It has admonitions for the rich—for the poor glad tidings. "It is one of the prime and distinguishing features of the character of the Deity, as revealed to us in Scripture, that the poor man, just as well as the rich man, is the object of his watchfulness: that he bows his ear to the cry of the meanest outcast ; so that there is not a smile upon a poor man's cheek, and there is not a tear in a poor man's eye, which passes any more unheeded by our God, than if the individual were a monarch on his throne, and thousands crouched in vassalage before him."* The condition of the poor in lands that are Christian, compared with other lands, speaks volumes for the Bible. The ten thousand acts of private munificence, as well as more public bounty in the forms of legal enactment, and the various eleemosynary institutions unknown to the world where the Bible is unknown, are no doubtful proof of the benevolence of its spirit. This blessed Book has no characteristic more obvious than sympathy for the oppressed and suffering classes of human society. It is like a bright sun, when he breaks through the cloud and falls upon the lowly vale ; it is God's light, cheering those who "dwell in darkness and unseen."

5. Another consideration by which the unearthly

* Melvill.

spirit of the Bible is illustrated, is derived from *the great end and motive which it reveals as the supreme and governing principle of the Divine conduct*. This Book discloses what no human philosophy ever thought of, and no systems of paganism have ever revealed—the ultimate end of the Deity in the creation and government of this lower world. It instructs us that God “made all things for himself;” that “for his pleasure they exist, and were created;” that “of him, and to him, and through him are all things, to whom be glory for ever.” It instructs us, that by all his works, he illustrates and manifests the inherent and unchanging perfection of his own glorious nature.

And what are these perfections? “God is light;” “God is love:” his infinite *wisdom* and *goodness* are those moral properties of his nature which he designs thus to unfold. There was no motive, no incitement from without; the irresistible impulse was all from within his own wise and benevolent mind. He could not but express and gratify his own wisdom and goodness; this was the consideration which moved him to create, to govern, to redeem. This, to some minds, may appear an abstract and metaphysical truth; but it is a great and glorious truth, a most precious and lovely truth; one which the Bible only reveals, and one in which we discover the true spirit of the book itself. As a dogma merely, it has a cold and abstract form; but it is inwoven and mingled with the genial warmth of love. It is not a frigid abstraction, but living, breathing kindness.

It is the theory of love, and a sure pledge for the actings of love. It is not a beautiful moonlight scene, but the sun of summer, filling all the regions of the earth, coming upon us with its balmy air, and enkindling within our bosoms deep-felt gratitude. What shall we say of the spirit of that Book which brings the blessed truth home to the business and bosoms of men, that all that God does is under the invariable impulse to what is wisest and best ; which speaks of love under the control of intelligence, and intelligence controlled by love—love that is all emotion and tenderness, all that is fond and paternal—that has not one chilling, or cheerless aspect, and no counterpart in the inventions of men ? The infidel sees difficulties in the government of the Most High, and sees them everywhere—difficulties which, as a moral and sensitive being, fill him with perplexity and darkness. Events have taken place, are taking place now, and will hereafter take place, that are evil ; but the Bible teaches us, that there is a benevolent design in the darkest dispensations ; and that they present the deep background of that great moral landscape, which brings out the strongest outlines of the Divine wisdom and goodness. What is difficult to us, is easy to God ; what to us is doubtful, to him is ascertained ; what to our view is full of perplexity, we are assured is directed to what is best. The Bible is not silent upon such topics as these ; it sees these evils ; it weighs them, feels them, discloses them, and that it may provide a remedy for them.

It is a strong mark of divine teaching, to be told, that everything that God does is under the impulse of goodness—goodness as extensive as creation, as constant as time, as enduring as eternity. Such are the teachings, and such the spirit of the sacred volume. Such is the relief it affords to millions of minds, otherwise shrouded in gloom. It pours light upon the darkest pages of this world's history, and makes the interminable future luminous. Nor are there any such benevolent teachings, except from the God of love.

6. Let us, as the crowning thought of the whole, dwell a few moments on *the spirit of this Book as expressed in its own wondrous method of redeeming mercy*. That it is above the invention of the human intellect, we have seen; equally is the *spirit* which dictated it above the well-known spirit of man. The more just indeed are our conceptions of the goodness which gave it birth, the deeper are our convictions that it is immeasurably above our reach. No man ever seriously addressed himself to the effort of making a due estimate of the love which originated this mysterious arrangement, without the impression, the strong inward feeling, that it is infinitely beyond the reach of his moral, as well as his intellectual powers. It requires love to perceive love: we have not love enough in our own bosoms, to perceive this amazing love of God. The true spirit of the Bible is not in its rightful and unbending authority merely, replete as this authority is with the goodness and majesty of its Divine Author; nor is

it merely in those rich and embodied truths, those moral considerations, drawn from so many sources, and which none but the heart of Infinite love could suggest : it is in the revelation it makes of the love of its Atoning, Redeeming Saviour. They are "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn," which make this disclosure ; but they are words of peace to the guilty ; counsels of peace, thoughts of love, overflowings of heavenly solicitude and compassion, which sought a channel at the greatest sacrifice, and one which "none of the princes of this world knew."

It was to subdue to the spirit of the Bible, and wash their sins away, and adopt into the family of heaven those whose wickedness had made them outcasts, and who were fit only for the abodes of infamy and shame, that the God of the universe consecrated his Son—his only and equal Son, on the altar of Justice ; "gave him up," abandoned him to sorrows that rent the heavens with an exceeding great and bitter cry ; to agony with which the graves, the rocks, the sun, the whole material world sympathized. And all for man that is a worm !

"O more exceeding love, or law more just—
Just law indeed, but more exceeding love!"

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" Dwell on this thought, and tell me whence it came ? Does it fall on the ear as the voice of man ? Has not every heart, that is not bereft of the last vestige

of filial affection, the irresistible consciousness that it is the voice of his "Father who is in heaven?" O, if it were for nothing else than the revelation the Bible makes of that "mighty movement made in heaven" when men were lost, this alone were enough to rescue it from the imputation of being the device of a vile impostor! There is an amplitude of goodness here, which is literally immeasurable; a self-denial of goodness, which never can be recompensed; a purity of goodness, which nothing can impeach; a constancy and watchfulness of goodness, that are never wearied, and that never slumber. Time does not weaken such love as this; distance does not change it; unkindness, ingratitude, and abuse do not exhaust it; nor is it exhausted by poverty, disease, crime, and death. It never shuts up the bowels of its compassion. It has a strength that surmounts the greatest obstacles; a height, and depth, and length, of which those who know most of it can only say that "it passeth knowledge." Was it ever known that an impostor put on such robes of love; or was any creature ever thus clad in the brightest adornment of the Deity?

Such is the spirit of the Bible; such is its love, its amazing, unsearchable love, in more respects than those of which the preceding induction of particulars is but a very partial expression. Love and mercy, the infinite love and mercy of the Infinite One, constitute its great and glowing themes from beginning to end; themes never lost sight of, never

obscured, never losing their ascendancy. Such a production was never the production of man: it is more than the human mind can conceive, that such a book should have its origin in this low earth. It is not the spirit of man, which this Book discloses; it is a spirit which belongs not to man's nature. Never has the universe seen, nor will it ever see so heavenly a spirit, save in these annals of heavenly mercy. No other book is imbued with such a spirit, because this alone is the Book of God. O, how unlike all other books is the sweet spirit of the Bible!

Let a man retire from the world with the Bible in his hand, and, even though the enemy of this wondrous Book, he must feel as though he were in another atmosphere than the atmosphere of earth. Nor can even such a man fail to contrast the heavenly fragrance of its spirit, with the nauseous fumes that come up from his own agitated and effervescing bosom; and if he is its friend, he feels as if he were fanned by the zephyrs of heaven, and encircled by its balmy breezes. Let us suppose an intelligent and well-instructed pagan, but lately emerged from the darkness of paganism, and brought to an acquaintance with the Bible, and to feel its power. It were difficult for us to conceive the impressions made upon such a mind, by the beauty and excellence of the spirit which this Book expresses. Contrasted with the spirit of paganism, it would seem to him like the balmy air and flushing verdure of spring after the dreary chills of a long winter. His dreaming anticipations of his own Elysium, would

be more than realized in that wondrous system of truth and love ; that tender regard for men, in all the various stages of their moral history ; that uniform and benignant tendency of its high-born institutions ; that impartial goodness to classes of men which paganism overlooks and despises ; that supreme and governing end of all the Divine conduct ; and that method of redeeming mercy, the design and object of which are to extricate men from darkness, by bringing them to the light of life ; to deliver them from bondage, by rescuing them from guilt ; to make them happy, by making them good. Such a man would almost involuntarily exclaim, 'This is truly a most wonderful book ; there is nothing like it in the counsels of earthly wisdom : it cannot be the work of an impostor !

And such are our own conclusions. There are associations of thought and feeling here, not only from which the dark and subtle mind of an impostor is widely and forever alienated, but which it is as irrational to trace to any other than a divine source, as it would be to attribute the *Pilgrim's Progress* to such a man as Thomas Paine. To a mind at all imbued with the spirit of the Bible, its divine origin is a thing of instant conviction, as if seen in the light of its own evidence, rather than a thing of lengthened and laborious proof. God has so ordained our mental constitution, that if the mind be not, to a lamentable degree, disordered and perverted by wickedness, we cannot but see that this lovely production is his own work. Like the

manna miraculously rained down in the Arabian desert, we need only inspect it in order to see that it is the "bread of heaven, which giveth life to the world." No more than a child can mistake the letter of love from the well-known hand of his earthly parent, can we mistake the celestial origin of these epistles of heavenly mercy. No more than a son can mistake his father's last will and testament, can we mistake this last Will and Testament of Him "who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore." Never could it have been written by any other hand. It is Godlike throughout, and breathes his lovely and blessed spirit. It has no origin, save in those eternal counsels of love which devised it; no resemblance, save where its own superhuman spirit is inscribed; no fulfilment, save in that heaven to which it tends. It presents a distinct exhibition of God himself. It is the mighty conception of his love. It stands alone in the world. It is God's Bible.

—————"Hast thou ever heard
Of such a book? The author, God himself;
The subject, God and man, salvation, life
And death—eternal life, eternal death—
Dread words! whose meaning has no end, no bounds.
Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord!
Star of eternity! the only star
By which the bark of man could navigate
The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
Securely! only star which rose on time,
And on its dark and troubled billows, stole,
As generation, drifting swiftly by,
Succeeded generation, thence a ray
Of heaven's own light, and to the hills of God,

Th' eternal hills, pointed the sinner's eye.
This book, this holy book, in every line
Marked with the seal of high divinity,
On every leaf bedewed with drops of love
Divine, and with th' eternal heraldry
And signature of God Almighty stamped
From first to last—this ray of sacred light,
This lamp from off the everlasting throne,
Mercy took down, and in the night of time
Stood, casting on the dark her gracious bow,
And evermore beseeching men, with tears
And earnest sighs, to hear, believe, and live.
And many to her voice gave ear and read,
Believed, obeyed: and now, as the Amen,
True, faithful Witness swore, with snowy robes
And branching palms surround the fount of life,
And drink the streams of immortality,
Forever happy, and forever young."

If the intelligence of this Book should fail to convince the reader, let its love persuade him. It is a kind volume, fitted to disarm prejudice, and subdue hostility. There are dark jealousies and most unworthy suspicions of it in the world. Men do injustice to it, because guilt is always suspicious; nor do their suspicions always go at their bidding. You love the man who throws around him an atmosphere of kindness. The Bible itself is such an atmosphere, without any mixture of impurity. It lives only to bless the world. And when its work of touching tenderness, diffusive, attractive blessedness is accomplished, it will return to Him who gave it, to impart new blessings, and shed new lustre on the heaven whence it came.

CHAPTER III.

THE MORAL RECTITUDE OF THE BIBLE.

IN adverting to the *spirit* of the Scriptures, I have not designed to call the reader's attention so much to their moral rectitude, as to their unearthly kindness. Benevolence is good will ; moral rectitude is conformity to what is right. The spirit of the Bible consults the happiness of men ; its moral rectitude, their character. Moral rectitude, though productive of happiness, is a distinct thing from happiness ; just as wickedness, though productive of misery, is a distinct thing from misery. The one is the effect ; the other, the cause. Moral rectitude is perceived by conscience ; happiness, by consciousness. Moral rectitude is the proper subject of command, and must always be required ; happiness may not be. Moral rectitude has moral qualities ; happiness may not have. The moral rectitude of the Scriptures, therefore, in distinction from their superhuman kindness, furnishes a fair, and as I shall endeavor to show, a good ground of argument, that they are neither the work of an impostor, nor of any human device.

It is inseparable from all just conceptions of God, that it is impossible for him to do wrong. He is the

source of all moral rectitude in the universe, and everywhere its supporter and patron. He is holy, and his holiness is infinite. He is the Holy One, and the only one who, by excellence, can challenge to himself the name of Holy. Holiness is an essential perfection of his nature ; it is full and perfect, without blemish, and without diminution or change. A book of which he is the Author must be a holy book, and must, necessarily, express his irreconcilable aversion to all that is wrong.

We cannot say this of man, nor of any book of which he is the author. We know what the character of man is. It is a humiliating confession, that we cannot give human nature credit for any great degree of moral virtue. There are not only great and obvious defections from moral integrity in every individual of our race, without exception ; but wickedness prevails to a degree sufficient to convince us, that the great principles of moral order in this world are all subverted. Wickedness exists in every form : wickedness in principle, and wickedness in practice ; wickedness in heart and life ; wickedness in every variety and measure. Degraded and degrading wickedness, and wickedness that is polished and honored ; wickedness in the solitude of the closet, and in the retirements of the domestic relations ; wickedness in nations and in the world ; wickedness in human laws and governments ; institutions and customs that are wicked ; a wicked press, and a wicked literature ; and withal, *religions* in abundance that are wicked, form the leading and promi-

nent features in the history of our race. There are strong propensities in men to that which is evil. The paths of licensed and ungoverned wickedness are pleasant to them; while the paths of virtue, truth, purity, honesty and honor, are uninviting to their depraved taste, and rugged and difficult.

These views of the human character have received the sanction of paganism itself, and are abundantly verified by the writings of its poets, philosophers, and historians. Not a few among infidels themselves do not dispute them. There is no doubt in this matter. There is but this one view that can be given of the character of man. Were the question asked, What are those persons most familiar with, and what reminiscences most haunt their imaginations, who are most versed in the history of our world? The one answer must be, that they, of all men, know most of human wickedness. Save a few bright spots, like the oases in the desert, the pilgrimage of the historian is through regions defiled by crime, polluted by idolatry and blood, agitated by ambition and revenge, desolated by cruelty and despotism, bearing the marks of violence and wrong, and everywhere presenting scenes of misery and horror, which furnish overwhelming proof of deep-seated wickedness in the heart of man, and in all the elements of his social organization.

Now the simple question we propose for consideration is, Whether such a book as the Bible was the production of the human mind; and whether it is a possible thing that a being, as degraded and

morally depraved as we know man to be, unless inspired by the God of spotless rectitude, could have been its author?

In determining this question, it is necessary that we inspect the moral rectitude of the Book itself. Men may inspect detached portions of it, and please themselves with some things, which, at first view, have the semblance of conniving at what is wrong. But let them read it; let them read the whole of it; let them carry along in their minds the character of the persons to which the different portions of it were addressed; the age of the world, and the circumstances under which the different parts of it were written, and the particular objects which even those portions of it have in view, which to an infidel mind appear the most exceptionable; and they may be rationally convinced that, instead of originating in the bosom of an impostor, it owes its origin to men who wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Let them scrutinize it with as much severity as they please; only let their scrutiny be well informed, wisely directed, and with a fair and ingenuous mind, and we have no fears for the issue. There are portions of it on which ignorance and folly have put constructions that are forced and unnatural, and which impure minds have viewed in shadows reflected from their own impurity. Montesquieu said of Voltaire, *Lorsque Voltaire lit un livre, il le fait, puis il écrit contre ce qu'il a fait*: "When Voltaire reads a book, he makes it what he pleases, and then writes against what he has made." It is

no difficult matter to besmear and blot its pages, and then impute the foul stains that men of corrupt minds have cast upon it, to its stainless Author. But if we honestly look at it as it is, we shall find that, like its Author, it is without blemish and without spot.

1. Among the characteristics of the Bible which are somewhat remarkable expressions of moral rectitude, the first that we notice is, *the truth and justness of its moral distinctions*. Pagan lands have never known in what moral rectitude consists, nor have pagan writers ever described it. Nothing can be found in their works to induce the belief that any true knowledge of it has ever sprung up as an indigenous plant upon the soil of unenlightened reason, or natural conscience.

The peripatetic philosophy, or the philosophy of Aristotle, described moral rectitude as consisting in *the mean between two extremes*; a definition, than which nothing is more undefinable. The stoical system, or the system of Zeno, describes it as *living according to nature*: alas, for the rectitude that consists in such a life! The system of Epicurus, in its best estate, described it as living as free as possible from the evils incident to life, and in the enjoyment of as large a measure as possible of its happiness; while in its subsequent corruptions, it is a system of mere animal pleasure and unrestrained sensuality. Human reason, untaught of God, has never been able to discover, to any such extent as is available for practical purposes, the difference between what is right and what is wrong. There is

no doubt that, to some extent, the natural universe recognizes this distinction, while no well-informed person will deny that there are both graces and sins, virtues and vices, which the language of paganism has not words to express.

The history of the world does not furnish examples of more manly thought, nor of greater sagacity and shrewdness, nor more wonderful powers of discrimination, than are found in the writings of pagan philosophers; yet on moral subjects their notions were not only vague and obscure, but in many instances absolutely puerile and foolish. They spoke of conduct as sacred, of which the Bible speaks as infamous; they treated as religious and honorable, what the Bible treats as debasing and flagitious. To such an extent, and so boldly, did they "put darkness for light, and light for darkness, good for evil, and evil for good," that their very religion required them to be immoral.

All their religious teachers did not indeed inculcate the same doctrines; what one condemned as a vice, another, equally profound, inculcated as a virtue. Nor were their teachings consistent and uniform; the same writers, and the same legislation that sometimes discountenanced wickedness, at others emboldened the perpetration of it. The reason why there are no accurate delineations of moral rectitude in heathen writers is, they had no divine teaching, and therefore no discernment of it. Right and wrong with them were arbitrary distinctions, and depended for the most part upon custom, upon the au-

herity of human laws, and upon the opinions of men. This is the ground on which Hobbes and other infidel writers rest all their moral distinctions. The history of pagan philosophy is interesting, because it is mournfully instructive as a history of the errors of the human mind, and as a practical proof of that excessive degradation to which the most refined and cultivated intellect is reduced, when destitute of Divine guidance. If we except those writings which derive their instructions from the Bible, there is but this one book that lays the foundation of moral obligation in the nature of the Deity, and in the nature and relations which men sustain towards him and one another, as he has revealed them. In the sparklings of pagan poetry, there are occasional scintillations of moral sentiment that are just and exalted ; and so there are in the more sober discussions of such a writer as the great heathen moralist, Seneca. But they are too varying and contradictory ; they affirm and deny almost in the same paragraph ; while the most unexceptionable, both of their poets and philosophers, are the teachers of flagrant wickedness. It is not so with the Bible. At a great remove from the ethics of the whole pagan and infidel world, the rectitude it describes is no scintillation of poetry, nor is it any sudden outbreking of conscience ; it is not brought out occasionally, and for effect, but is inwoven with all its revelations, and is the uniform characteristic of the book itself. Instead of being influenced by the opinions of men, and controlled by their example, customs, and laws,

its aim is to influence and control men themselves. Instead of inculcating a rectitude that is based on the principles of expediency, and urging the claims of godliness as a profitable speculation, and sacrificing the interests of moral rectitude to any other interests, it uniformly pursues the opposite course; and in every instance where other interests come in collision with the claims of moral rectitude, the latter hold absolute supremacy.

This were a somewhat remarkable fact in a work to be traced no higher than the artifice of an impostor. Whence is it, that in an age of the world when human learning was so ignorant, human philosophy so unwise, and the virtue and teachings of its sages so erring, a collection of impostors should have this strange præminence? Whence is it, that a system of morals, devised by such men, should strike its roots so deep into the great principles of God's government, and the moral constitution of man? Whence is it, that all the results of human philosophy are so infinitely surpassed by the moral principles of a book, which has its origin in deception and falsehood? "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Does not this revelation, by the mere truth and justness of its moral distinctions, show that it is God's work, and not the work of man?

2. It is the great peculiarity of the Bible also, that it furnishes the *only perfect standard of moral rectitude*. Human reason does not know enough to furnish such a standard; nor is it sufficiently impartial to do so, if it were able. Conscience is not

sufficiently enlightened to furnish such a standard ; nor, in fallen man, is she sufficiently honest to do so, were she enlightened. One Being in the universe there is, and only one, who is capable of deciding what in all instances of human conduct is right in itself, and of revealing the unerring rule of right to the creatures he has made.

There is a law in the Scriptures, called the Moral Law, and comprised in ten precepts, there affirmed to have been written by the finger of God. It is a law which uniformly and always commands what is right, and prohibits what is wrong. Without stopping to expound it, it is enough to say, that it is so comprehensive as to be applicable to every creature in the universe, and to every instance of his moral conduct. Just as it is proof of the Divine wisdom, to secure and control ten thousand events in the natural world by one simple law of nature ; so it is one of the proofs of his wisdom, to govern every creature in the universe by this one, simple law of rectitude. This law is a perfectly decisive standard, and one that is perfectly adapted to the workings of natural conscience. The conscience of every man that is enlightened by it, endorses it as truly as the congregation of Israel did, when, at the rehearsal of every precept and penalty, “all the people said, Amen.”

There are several things in relation to this great rule of moral conduct, that are worthy of a moment's thought.

It is a consideration not to be overlooked, that it

extends itself to *the heart*, and does not stop short of the inward *principles and motives* of human conduct. It does not sever the outer from the inner man ; but regards his principles and motives as the germ of which his outward conduct is the development. It reaches the fountain, and gains nothing, and cares for nothing, until it carries the heart. It identifies the love of God with keeping his commandments, and keeping his commandments with the love of God. It condemns the boasted rectitude of principle which is without an outward and visible morality, as well as a Pharisaic morality that is destitute of right principle.

Another fact in relation to it is, its wonderful comprehensiveness. It comprises everything that men think, or say, or do, as well as everything they omit which they ought to perform. In its inductions of particulars, the thought of evil, and the murderous act, the two extremes of human wickedness, are specified as including the entire range of human conduct.

Another fact in relation to it is, that it is applicable to all men alike, regards all their conduct, and is to be carried everywhere. It is not for the old only, but for the young ; it is not for the poor only, but for the rich ; it is not for the monastery and the cloister, the closet and the family merely ; nor is it confined to the sanctuary and the Sabbath ; but it regards all the relations of society as the spheres of its influence. It consecrates the reciprocal dependencies, obligations, and intercourse between man and

man, as well as between man and his Maker ; and looks upon this whole earth, with all the variety of its aspects and employments, as a temple, every part of which ought to be vocal with God's praise and devoted to his glory.

Another fact is, that it is unbending in its claims, and requires a rectitude that is sinless. Its course is a straight one, and without the least deviation from a right line. No departure from it is allowed, under any possible pretence or any imaginable circumstances. It never modifies its high claims in accommodation to the character and condition of men, the maxims of the world, the laws and usages of society, or the force of temptation. Nothing in the universe relaxes the obligation, or countervails the life and spirit of it ; but it is of perpetual force and obligation in all worlds, and throughout eternity.

Nor does it stand unenforced with appropriate and equitable penalties. It does not merely describe the rectitude it enjoins ; nor does it simply *counsel* men to obedience : it *binds* them at their peril, and on the most fearful penalties. Its language is in the highest degree authoritative. It is not at their option ; they have no choice in the matter ; the only alternative is obedience, or death, death eternal, and without reprieve. Its punitive power is not passion, but principle ; it is not a vacillating policy, but an established law of the Divine kingdom. It is one upon which the great moral Governor of the universe conducts his government towards every part of it, and with impartial equity ;

one which he will emphatically act out, when he bids the incorrigible depart into everlasting fire. The Scriptures magnify this unbending rectitude of the Divine government; they represent it as one of the excellencies of the Divine character, that he "is angry with the wicked every day;" that he "hateth all the workers of iniquity;" and that his punitive justice is as truly the befitting theme of praise on the lips of the unfallen and of the redeemed, as his larger and preëminent grace.

Infidels have reviled the Bible, for this perfect and unbending standard of moral rectitude which it reveals. Here we are fairly at issue with them: what they affirm to be evidence of its imperfection, we affirm to be evidence of its perfection; what they affirm could not have originated with a Being of perfect benevolence, we affirm could never have originated with man, whose benevolence and rectitude are so imperfect. We are content to make the appeal to every honest mind, whether such a standard of rectitude, enforced by such penalties, is of human origin, or Divine?

The conclusion is rational and just. Such moral rectitude never originated in this unrighteous world. Such precepts and sanctions of righteousness are not the device of an impostor. From what we know of the character of man, can we suppose him to be such a lover and vindicator of moral rectitude, as to have guarded it by such a code?

Let the complaints of this wicked world against this eternal rule of right, and these eternal sanctions

of it, be an answer to these inquiries. Let the reproach, and reviling, and bitter and malignant sarcasm of infidelity, so profusely bestowed on those portions of the Bible which most insist on claims like these, be our answer to them; and let them teach us, that the moral rectitude of this book is as far above the conceptions and device of men, as the thoughts of God are above the thoughts of man, and the ways of God above man's ways.

3. Another expression of the moral rectitude of the Bible is found in *the solicitude it expresses, and the means it adopts for the promotion of moral rectitude among men.* The moral distinctions, the standard of rectitude, and the sanctions by which its great rule of right is supported and enforced, are doubtless expressions of this solicitude, and themselves to be numbered among these selected means. But these are not the whole of them.

Men have strayed very far from rectitude, and are perpetually, and on all sides, exposed to greater and endless aberrations. They need to be instructed in the path by which they may retrace their steps. Their apostate character, the obtuseness of their consciences, and great moral blindness, call for some adequate means of moral transformation; some animating stimulus to what is right; some protection from the storm of passions that assault the soul; some secure guardianship against the seductions of a corrupting world; some interposition of a power that is effective to the production of a more sound and better mind; some supporting hand to keep them

from falling ; some sacred influences that shall fit them to behold the face of God in peace, and to live and reign with him forever.

If we reject the Bible, where are these varied influences to be found ? Infidels ought to feel themselves under obligations to tell us where. They would fain take away the rectitude which the Bible imparts ; but they leave us nothing, absolutely nothing, in its place. Natural science does not reclaim men from wickedness ; if it did, why were the most scientific and literary nations of ancient times the most wicked ? Human laws cannot reclaim them ; for it is an acknowledged fact, that in the best forms of civil government the world has seen, there is nothing to effect this moral renovation.

I need scarcely say, that we must despair of producing anything like an exemplary moral rectitude in the world, if we abandon those principles and means of reform, which are found alone in the Bible. If we except those human writings which draw their instructions from this source, there is but this one book that is at all fitted to accomplish, or that seriously aims at accomplishing this great work. It is not easy for us to estimate the difficulty of accomplishing it, or even the difficulty of making a hopeful commencement. If you advert to the early instructions given to men after the first apostacy had its terrific sweep over the nations, you cannot but observe the concern, the caution, and the great condescension which the Bible expresses, merely to imbue the minds of the nation, to whom its first

revelations were given, with some just conceptions of moral rectitude itself. By all that was fearful in the moral, and all that was exact in the ceremonial law, and by all that was peculiar in their own separation from the surrounding and idolatrous nations, lessons were taught them which all the volumes of pagan philosophy could not inculcate. It was only thus progressively that their minds could be opened to moral distinctions, and their consciences awakened to the consideration of what God himself approves and will accept, and what he disapproves and will punish. This is one great point to be secured in the minds of fallen men, and a most important beginning in the work of moral culture.

In prosecuting this hallowed design, the next step is, to furnish some clear and distinct *exemplification* of moral rectitude.

This the Scriptures do, especially in the delineations they make of *the holy character of God*. They could accomplish nothing without this; for men had lost the knowledge of God. Not one thought of his immutable excellence, or of the unblotted rectitude of his nature, entered into their religious systems. Their subordinate deities were examples of shameless vice; while their notions of the supreme Deity betray the profoundest ignorance, and the most contemptuous disrespect. It is a remarkable fact in the history of men, that the conceptions they form of moral rectitude depend upon their conceptions of the Divine character. They are uniformly like the gods they worship. The devout worshipper of the true

God resembles his Father who is in heaven. The devotee of false gods resembles the gods he worships, gradually acquires the character of the object with which he has religious intercourse, and receives the stamp and seal of it upon his own mind. And this is in perfect accordance with the laws of our intellectual and moral constitution. The Scriptures, speaking of the idols of the heathen, teach us that "they who make them are *like them*, and so is every one that putteth his trust in them." The conception of perfect moral rectitude is nowhere found to exist in the human mind, save where there are just conceptions of the Deity. The holiness of God binds men to be holy : it is written, "*Be ye holy, for I am holy.*"

God himself is represented in the Scriptures as a holy God : his purposes are holy ; his government is holy ; his word is holy ; his day is holy. Him they make the pattern and the patron, the shield, and the exceeding great reward of holiness in men, while they everywhere teach us, that in becoming holy, men become his people, and God himself becomes their God. All the instructions of the Bible are designed as means of grace, and helps to godliness. Its choicest privileges exert the most hallowed influence. Its ordinances, its sanctuary, its ministry, its fellowship, were all instituted for the purpose of training up "a peculiar people, zealous of good works ;" nor are the mere literalities and mechanism of their outward observance there regarded as of any avail, or otherwise than mockery. If we prize its

promises, they are revealed that "we might be partakers of the Divine nature." If we value its mercy-seat, "there," says the God of all grace, "will I meet thee, and I will commune with thee, of all things which *I will give thee in commandment.*" If we value fellowship with God, we are reminded that if we "regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us." The entire worship which the Bible requires is "in the beauties of holiness." This spirit of heaven, transferred to earth, as the "dew of youth from the womb of the morning," and constituting the highest adornment of his followers, is the promised reward of its great subject and Redeemer. "Fruit unto holiness" is its end and its heaven.

Again, I ask, Is there no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that this Book is of human origin? Can it be the production of a mind whose great characteristic is, that it hates righteousness?

4. There is still another expression of moral rectitude, which strongly marks the revelations made in the Scriptures. I mean, *the protection they extend to the claims and interests of moral rectitude in the dispensations of pardoning mercy.* The expiatory death of Christ, as a satisfaction to Divine justice, in the behalf of repentant and reformed transgressors, must ever be regarded as the strongest proof of moral rectitude in the instructions of the Scriptures themselves. Can any lesson be more instructive to the world, or to the universe, than that great lesson taught from Calvary, where the Eternal Son of God himself died on the cross to make an effective atone-

ment for the sins of men, for the purpose of vindicating the stern claims of righteousness? Rather than sacrifice, or trifle with eternal rectitude, or connive at wrong, the sword of justice was commissioned to awake against the "Fellow" of the Lord of hosts, and pierce his righteous soul, who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Let the infidel scoff no more, nor indulge his learned curiosity in picking at this mountain of God's holiness. He will not find in it the alloy he hopes to find : in this mass of pure gold there are not even those grains of sand he is seeking after. Rectitude and mercy have here no conflicting interests ; because the claims of rectitude are propitiated by an adequate and honorable atonement. It is the language of mercy which is here uttered, but only as it is warranted, echoed by justice. The moral rectitude that is outraged by the sin of man, is vindicated by the death of Christ. The redemption by Christ stands forever side by side with the only revealed standard and sanctions of moral rectitude ; and while it pardons those whom the law condemns, it does so without impugning either the veracity or righteousness of the Lawgiver.

It does more than this. Its very love and mercy are the great and only effectual means of restoring apostate men to the moral rectitude from which they have fallen. If the true Christian enters upon a course of obedience, freed from the embarrassments of a legal condemnation, and no longer struggling under the thralldom of the curse ; it is that he may run in the way of God's commandments with an

enlarged heart, and be cheered by the light of his countenance in doing his will. The salvation the Bible speaks of is a salvation *from sin*, and restores not less to the Divine resemblance than the Divine favor. This is the most important, as it is the most prominent feature of the Christian economy; it covers indeed the whole ground of a supernatural revelation, and employs all the pens that have given it to the world, from Moses to John. Its enemies have severely scrutinized its moral influence; and not a few of them have been constrained to acknowledge, that it reveals the only system of truth, and the only motives by which men become holy.

It is no unusual thing for infidels themselves, in many instances, to do homage to the moral rectitude of the Bible. "We always recur," says Melvill, "with great delight to the testimony of a Deist, who, after publicly laboring to disprove Christianity, and to bring Scripture into contempt as a forgery, was found instructing his own child from the pages of the New Testament. When taxed with the flagrant inconsistency, his only reply was, that *nowhere was there to be found such morality as in the Bible!* We thank the Deist for the confession. Whatever our scorn of a man who could be guilty of so foul a dishonesty, seeking to sweep from the earth a volume to which all the while himself has recurred for the principles of education, we thank him for his testimony, that the morality of the Scriptures is a morality not elsewhere to be found; so that if there were no Bible, there would be comparatively no

source of instruction in duties and virtues, whose neglect and decline would dislocate the happiness of human society. The Deist was right. Deny or disprove the divine origin of the Scriptures, and nevertheless, you must keep the volume as a kind of text-book of morality." Lord Herbert himself acknowledges, "that in this respect, Christianity is the best religion;" nor, strange as the inconsistency may be, does he hesitate to say, that "the great design of all its doctrines, and even of the rites and ceremonies there enjoined, is to establish those great principles in which true religion properly consists." No man ever rejected the Bible without exhibiting the demoralizing influence of his unbelief. I care not who the person is that makes this disastrous experiment; but let him deny the truth, obligations, and hopes there revealed, and he will find, to his cost, that his sinful propensities gain augmented power, and that in every instance he becomes a worse, instead of a better man. Without the Bible, men are atheists or idolaters, and always wicked men; with it, if they are not virtuous and good men, it is from the power of wickedness, which is proof against the best means of reform. It is because the safest and surest directory, the most cheering encouragement, the plainest and most weighty obligations and sanctions, and the best fitted and most urgent motives to rectitude that are known in the universe, cannot control them.

Such is the moral rectitude of the Bible. Let

us, in a few words, *close up* the argument for its divine origin from this single consideration. Our argument is simply this. In the language of Lord Bacon, "Truth is in order to goodness." Goodness never was, never can be the genuine fruit of error. There is no absurdity more monstrous, than that truth and moral rectitude are at war with one another. No system of falsehood is thus distinguished for its love of rectitude, and its uniformly hallowed influence. If this Bible be indeed the production of uninspired man, it is not in keeping with his well-known character, or his well-known religious inventions. If it be the production of uninspired man, it were a phenomenon, a miracle, more difficult to be accredited than the inspiration which is the scoff of the unbeliever. Nothing is more distant from human thought, than habitual familiarity with holy things and a holy God. Corrupted man never devised a book so pure and holy; proud man, a book so humbling; selfish and worldly man, a book so self-denying and spiritual: man, depraved, wicked man, a book so full of rebuke for his wickedness, that it stings with unsparing and immeasurable severity all his vices, has no truce with sin, and actually wages against it a war of extermination. Was it ever

———"heard in tale, or song,
From old, or modern bard, in hall or bower,"

that such a revelation is the work of man? There

is absurdity in such an hypothesis which evinces this holy Book to be its own witness. "Every kingdom divided against itself, is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself, shall not stand." If the Bible be the work of an impostor, it is a most unhappy effort for his own cause. The arch-deceiver must have taken leave of his usual sagacity, in not restraining the pen that gave it to the world. If it *be* the devil's work, it is a complete failure. "If Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how shall then his kingdom stand?" Men are "wise to do evil;"—too wise to have erected a standard that should be the rallying point of every virtuous thought and affection, and give currency to a system that shall be abso ute ruin to themselves.

Never could the depraved intelligence and depraved heart of man have inculcated such lessons. Nothing is farther from man's invention than such a theory, such a code, such a system of obligations, and such delineations of excellence—excellence, at once so lofty and so untarnished, that, like this Book of gems, it is difficult to say whether it attracts most by the loveliness of its spirit, or its unvarying, transparent rectitude.

I know of but one answer to this argument that is even plausible. It may be said, that all men are not equally bad; that we have given too sombre a shading to the character of the race; and that there have been all along through the tracts of time, noble and exalted specimens of humanity; men of truth

and probity, benevolent men, who desired above all things the moral elevation of their fellows; and that it is no impossible thing for such men to have been the authors of the Sacred Writings. Our conclusive answer to this objection is threefold. In the first place, no such men have ever claimed to be the authors of this remarkable volume; and if it be the work of such men, is there any possible motive for them to have left it anonymous? On the other hand, is there not every motive in the excellence of the book itself, for them to have avowed themselves its authors? In the next place, *such* men never would have been *impostors*, claiming the unerring guidance of inspiration. In the third place, we fall back upon the assertion, that the thing itself is impossible. We know there are exceptions to the unmixed sinfulness of our race, in lands where the Scriptures have exerted their influence upon the human character; and that in other lands all are not equally bad; that there have been here and there rare lights amid the moral darkness of the pagan world; and that men like Socrates, and Plato, and Seneca, Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius, aimed to act the part of reformers. Men have invented systems of religion; they have enjoyed the unembarrassed opportunity of exerting their inventive powers on religious themes; they have brought to their inventions, genius and learning, logic and eloquence. And the results are before the world. The works of the best heathen philosophers speak for themselves, bear the moral image of their authors, and

carry with them their own evidence of a human origin. All human systems of religion are wicked systems, because their authors were wicked men—systems of immorality and abomination, cherishing and calling into action the most depraved passions of the human heart, and degrading their votaries to the level of brutes. The best of them, like those of Confucius and Mahomed, are but memorials of great minds made little by falsehood, and degraded by sin; of splendid and original talents actually deformed by moral depravity—proofs of imaginative genius, and affecting indications that “the light that was in them was darkness.” When infidels tell us of systems of faith and codes of morality that are of human origin, they speak intelligibly; nor would we depreciate these marvellous discoveries. We look at them just as they are: and what are they? It is difficult for human ingenuity and human wickedness combined, to render them worse than they are. Nor have they been improved, from the days of ancient Assyria to the present hour. They may have originated splendid temples, but their divinities are mean and contemptible; their offerings may have been costly, while the most costly are the most degrading and ruinous; and their worshippers, like their divinities and rites, dishonorable and dishonored—vile in their affections, filled with all unrighteousness, and to every good work reprobate. Aside from those human compositions of which the Scriptures are the basis, there is not a volume in all the rich and accumulated libraries of

earth, which diffuses the least fragrance of a celestial atmosphere, much less that "savors the things that be of God," and like the Bible, glows with the splendors of his holiness.

It need not surprise us that men like those who have written against this Book of God, should not have the clearest conceptions of its moral rectitude. The moral rectitude of the Scriptures nauseates them. Let there be but the infant breathings of moral virtue in the soul, though it were the gentlest movement brooding upon the face of chaos, and the spirit within them will give a ready response to the still holier spirit within these Sacred Oracles, instinctively recognizing their beauty, their glory, their divinity. There are no more direct antipodes than sin and the Bible. He who would enjoy and profit by it, as a mere production of wisdom, must cultivate a conformity to its rectitude. This great characteristic he will find stamped upon it everywhere—sanctifying its history, elevating its poetry, breathing itself into all its principles, and throwing a hallowed and joyous influence around its varied scenery. It will please no man, the state of whose mind is at war with its rectitude; nor can he profit by it, so long as it displeases him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PECULIAR AND DISTINGUISHING DOCTRINES OF
THE BIBLE, EVIDENCE OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN.

THE Gospel which was preached by "me," says the great apostle, "is not after man." His appeal for proof of its divine origin, was to the Gospel he preached.

The peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of which this apostle was the advocate, are the doctrines of the entire Scriptures. We affirm concerning them, that *they are doctrines which never could have originated with men.*

The Scriptures not merely contain a code of morals, but a system of truth: great and distinctive doctrines. Nor may we abandon this position, because believers in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures are not themselves agreed in their statements of these doctrines. Truth is not dependent on the opinions of men; nor is it the less important because men differ in their views concerning it, or in their exposition of the Sacred Scriptures. The Scriptures contain truths that are their own; truths which none but God knew, and which none but God was able to reveal. We find them in the Bible, and must

allow the Bible to utter them in its own way. If the great doctrines of the Bible furnish any inherent evidence of their divine origin, it is because they are peculiar, and truths nowhere else revealed. Let them speak for themselves. We will not, in our argument, put any construction of our own upon them, but merely present them in the language of the Scriptures, "without note or comment."

One of these doctrines relates to the *character of man before it is brought under the transforming power of Christianity*. On this subject the representations of the Bible are plain, and easy to be understood. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

If from this universality of human sinfulness, we inquire for its degree of intensity and power, we are instructed by such declarations as the following: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts." "When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness." "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." "And you

hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "The carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

If we inquire for the origin of this depravity, the answer of the Bible is, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother couceive me." "The wicked are estranged from the womb ; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." "Thou wast called a transgressor from the womb." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

If we proceed to the question, How is this universal, this deep-seated, this native sinfulness to be accounted for? this problem also the Scriptures solve in declarations that are uniform and unequivocal. "In Adam, all die." "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." "By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners."

Another great doctrine of the Bible relates to *that moral transformation of character which is indispensable to salvation.*

In regard to this, it teaches that this transformation is necessary. "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit, for why will ye die?" "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Cleanse that is within, that the outside may be clean also." "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom

of God. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

It teaches the nature of this change, in such declarations as these: "'The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.'" "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take the hard and stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh." "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

In regard to the means by which this transformation is produced, their language is, "'The sower soweth the word.'" "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe." "In Christ Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Of the efficient cause of this change, they say, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." "You hath he quick-

ened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

Another important doctrine of which they speak, is the *well-defined method of the sinner's pardon and acceptance with God.*

They teach what it is not, when they say, "It is not by works of righteousness which we have done." "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law." "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight."

And they teach us what it is, when they say "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe."

Another of the great doctrines of the Bible relates to *the nature of true religion, the distinctive character of Christian piety.* On this subject its instructions are greatly extended, and exhibited in a great variety of forms.

It admonishes us of a religion that is spurious, in such declarations as these: "They have not turned

unto me with their whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord." "With their mouth, they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." "Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? To whom the king shall say, I know you not, whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

They also define and delineate the religion that is genuine. It is "the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost;" and the love of God that "keepeth his commandments." It is the charity, without which all else "profiteth nothing." It is "not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." These emotions they uniformly represent as supreme and paramount in every bosom where they exist. "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me." "He that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that will lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it."

Another great and peculiar doctrine of the Bible relates *to the purpose of God in extending his grace and salvation to a chosen people*. Here its language is cautious, well selected, and emphatic. "Many are called, but few are chosen." "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world." "Predestinated unto the adoption of children." "The called

of God according to his purpose ; for whom he did foreknow, them also he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded."

It is also among the cardinal truths of the Bible, that *all the incorrigible enemies of God shall be punished with everlasting destruction, and that their sufferings shall be literally without end.* "Verily, thou shalt by no means come out thence, until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." "Some shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt." "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." "Punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power." "The smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever." "Cast into the fire that shall never be quenched." "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "Nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."

Nor may we overlook the great truth, that the Bible enforces *the duty of believing the Gospel, on all men who hear, or have the opportunity of hearing it.* "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let

him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." "Repent and believe the Gospel." "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." "If I say the truth, *why* do ye not believe me?" The Bible allows no excuse, and admits no delay in the performance of this reasonable duty. "When will ye be wise?" "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "We are ambassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The end and object of preaching the Gospel is said to be, "for obedience to the faith among all nations."

The preceding specifications are not designed to present even a summary of Christian doctrine; but merely some of those truths which have a strong prominence in the Bible, and the same prominence in this branch of our argument. The Bible contains these truths. It is not my object to expound them: let them be expounded by different denominations of Christendom, fairly and with an honest conscience. To say nothing of the construction which must, in our judgment, be put upon them, our position is, that *these truths*, put upon them what construction you will, *could not have been of human invention, and that they clearly indicate a*

heavenly origin. We maintain this position by the following reasons.

In the first place, *no false religion possesses such frank and unreserved honesty.* Men are acute judges of everything in the form of religious imposture. Artifice in this matter, however ingenious, is very apt to be discovered; it cannot endure severe scrutiny. There are spurious productions in the world, which assume to be of Divine authority, which no sober man regards in any other light than mere fabrication, and which are distinguished by nothing more than the absence of every criterion of divine inspiration. False religions are proverbially systems of practised concealment; systems in which there is a designed immingling of truth and falsehood.

This remark is abundantly verified, both by the paganism of Greece and Rome, and the Koran of Mahomed. Neander, in his "Ecclesiastical History of the first three centuries," remarks, that "the ruling opinion of all the thinking men of antiquity was that *pure, religious truth*, could not be proposed to the multitude; but only such a mixture of fiction, poetry and truth, as would serve to represent religious notions in such a manner that they might make an impression on men whose only guide was their senses." Paganism had its *mysteries*, of which all were ignorant except the initiated. Each of the heathen gods, besides the worship paid to him in public, had a secret worship, to which none were admitted but those who were prepared by previous

ceremonies. This secret worship was termed "the mysteries of the god," and was always paid in the night. I cannot describe it better than by saying, it was a system of free masonry. The initiated were bound, under the severest penalties, to conceal the secrets of these nocturnal orgies. Whatever their religion was, it was not published to the world.

There is nothing of all this in the Bible. Whatever else may be said concerning it, it is a bold and honest book. So every ingenuous mind decides that it should be. Of all subjects in the world, *religion* is one of universal concernment; if it possesses any vital importance, it is equally as important to one man as another: it admits of no concealment of any of its principles from any class, or part of mankind. Nor will it be denied that it is one of the distinctive features of the religion of the Scriptures, that it has no concealment. Its first messengers were commissioned to go publicly and boldly to proclaim their messages in the presence of the haughtiest monarchs and the proudest courts. The long succession of teachers and prophets under the Old Testament dispensation, addressed themselves to the entire Jewish nation. When the Founder of Christianity gave their commission to his apostles, he required them to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." When the high priest "asked Jesus of his disciples and of his *doctrine*," Jesus answered, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing."

Both Christ and his apostles everywhere uttered these great and distinguishing doctrines to which we have just referred. These truths are, and have been for centuries published to the world, without the least restriction or reserve, inviting scrutiny, and everywhere proclaiming, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!" The Bible has not one concealed principle: it has no secret worship, no secret government or policy, and no society of men that are bound by vows of secrecy. Its laws are public; its institutions are established openly; its solemn assemblies, and all its rites and observances, have the nations for their witnesses. It has no stratagem, no management, no trimming, time-serving prudence, which reluctates at discovering its real sentiments. It has no Platonic distinction between *exoteric* and *esoteric* doctrines, or the doctrines that are taught to the multitude, and the doctrines that are taught to the few. It has no concern lest its claims should be too freely canvassed, or its principles too extensively to thoroughly understood. It discusses a great variety of topics of vital interest to men, but it does so without embarrassment. It is far from being a dull and tame book, for the reason that it is an honest book. It speaks the mind and will of its Author with so much frankness, that when once men are interested in it, their interest is sure to be deep and permanent. While it makes no boast of originality, and affects nothing of a self-glorying and sturdy independence of thought, it exhibits truth with a simplicity and fearlessness that are never controlled

by the opinions of men, and that ask no indulgence. Every attentive reader must have been impressed with this peculiarity of the Scriptures; and have a strong conviction, that, in this respect, they differ from that caution and reserve which mark the productions of an impostor.

The object of an impostor is to practise deception; he could scarcely fail to wrap up his system in some disguise. He would never disclose *such truths as those which we have specified*, even if they had a place in his system. It would have been a very easy thing for the authors of the sacred books to have suppressed these truths; and in so doing they would have silenced the cavils of a large class of opposers. But they were honest and truthful to the letter. Their object was truth—God's truth; and therefore there is nothing kept back, nothing discolored, nothing softened by those delicate and deceptive touches of the pencil that suppress truth, or imingle truth with error.

2. Our next remark is, that *no false religion would have given these great and peculiar doctrines the prominent place which they occupy in the Sacred Scriptures*. Were we to adopt the loose notions of Christian doctrine which are adopted by some who call themselves Christians, we should feel that we had abandoned Christianity itself, and had become the advocates of a system but little in advance of natural religion. But in so doing, we should have an inward conviction that we had abandoned one of the strongholds of a supernatural revelation.

While the truths we have specified bear strong marks of peculiarity, they are everywhere prominent, and enter deeply into the foundations of the Christian faith. They are represented in the Scriptures as revealed for the purpose of being believed; nor is there any injunction more explicitly enforced, than that which makes it the duty of men to believe, love, and obey them. We are nowhere instructed in this book that it is of no consequence what men believe; the Bible makes a true and cordial faith in God's word the turning point of their salvation. "Whosoever will not hearken to my words, I will require it of him." "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape who refuse him that speaketh from heaven." It is a revealed principle of the Bible, that men reject its truths at their peril. To those who "do not obey *the truth*, God will render tribulation and anguish." There may be ignorance of the cardinal truths of which we have spoken; there may be strong prejudices of education against them; there may be objections to the form of expression in which they are presented in human formularies; yet, the Bible itself being judge, no man can be at heart a Christian who rejects *that revelation of them* which is made in the Scriptures.

Such is the importance which the Bible attaches to these great truths as a matter of practice, and as furnishing a test of Christian character. Nor does it assign a less important place to them as a matter

of theory, and as the standard of a true Christianity. It styles everything else that is inconsistent with these, "another gospel," and imprecates God's anathema upon those who preach it. These truths are represented as fundamental to the Gospel, as well as essential to piety. They hold the same place in the system of truth, which they hold in the system of grace and salvation. They are not points of mere abstract speculation, but constitute the sum and substance, the heart and soul, of all the instructions which the Bible contains. They maintain an indissoluble connection: if any one of them is fairly disproved, our confidence is lost in the whole. Take away the Scriptural doctrine of human sinfulness, and there is no need of the doctrine of regeneration; nor of the doctrine of redemption through the blood of Christ; nor of a preached Gospel; nor of the doctrine of discriminating and electing grace; nor of the doctrine of everlasting punishment. Take away the doctrine of everlasting punishment, and all the other doctrines fall with it. Deny the Divine purpose to save a part of mankind, and all the correlative truths which make up and fulfil that purpose, have no place in the sacred record. These great truths are therefore not only found in the Bible, but are essential to the existence of Christianity, and lie at the foundation of the whole method of grace through the Redeemer.

We affirm, that no false religion would have given such doctrines *this prominence*. An impostor would have been too wary to have done this; he

never could have been so insensate as to have insisted on these great peculiarities, as constituting the pith and marrow of his religion.

It is the object of false religions to make the way to heaven a broad and easy path, and strew it with flowers. On no subject were the writers of the sacred volume more strongly tempted to practise a sort of "pious fraud," than by suppressing these pungent and heart-searching truths, and thus making the way of life easier than it is, and holding forth inducements to piety, that might be deceptive and ensnaring. But they never do this. False religions are anxious to multiply converts at the expense of truth; the Bible nowhere manifests any such solicitude. These great truths sound the note of caution and alarm, and bid men count the cost of becoming Christians. In no instance do the sacred writers conceal the trials or embarrassments that are incident on a firm attachment to the truth of God. A cautious and sagacious deceiver would never have deduced from the truths he had uttered, the practical result, "Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it;" nor the equally solemn declaration, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat." Nor would truths that necessarily lead to such a result, ever have found a place in the Bible, had it been the production of a deceiver. False religions urge men to the adoption of their systems of error, from unhalloed and unworthy motives; the Bible, on the

other hand, urges them to truth and duty, and for truth and duty's sake. It nowhere instructs men, that if they receive these great truths and practise the duties they enjoin, it is of no consequence by what motives they are influenced. It deals frankly in this matter. It reveals great and cardinal truths; it urges them upon the conscience by the authority of God, and by their own intrinsic excellence, and then leaves them to do their own execution.

3. Another remark in relation to these truths is, that *no false religion would have disclosed truths that are so unwelcome and obnoxious to the human heart.* The object of the Bible is not to please men, but to instruct and save them. Hence it withholds no truth, be it ever so unwelcome. While it evinces no desire to excite the hostility of men, or to excite, or confirm their prejudices against the truth; so far is it from shrinking from a disclosure of the most unwelcome truths, that these are the truths on which it insists with the greatest urgency. Instead of interesting men for an hour, its object is to interest them for eternity. Instead of fearing their displeasure, it lays its account for it, and proclaims these unwelcome truths "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear." Instead of offering incense to their pride, its object is to bring their hearts to the test of truths the most humbling. Instead of descanting, however wisely, and learnedly, and beautifully upon such truths as these, they simply hold them up to the inspection of men in all

their transparency, and illumined by the lights of heaven.

Does it require any labored argument to prove that these truths *are* unwelcome and obnoxious to the human heart. We appeal to the nature of these truths themselves, to the conscious hostility of men towards them, to the history of the past, and to all human observation, where these truths are faithfully exhibited, if it be not so? Men do not love to be told they are such sinners as the Bible represents them. Our race is a proud one. No child loves to be told its faults. Men who believe the Bible to be true, quarrel with its faithful delineations, and its unsparing rebukes of human wickedness. These representations are most humiliating to the self-complacent heart of man. The great mass of men cannot bear to be told that they are so vile. Not a few are there who, like the hearers of Stephen, almost “gnash upon” the preacher “with their teeth,” who boldly takes the part of the Bible, and tells them to their faces how vile they are in God’s sight. So of every truth in detail, to which we have referred. The effect which these truths produce upon the minds of wicked men is a very powerful and painful effect, and they resist them as long as they can. They are truths which do not allow the least apology for sin; they are strong and heavy truths; they are like the fire and the hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces; they are the axe “laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire.”

Wicked men want a different sort of Bible from this. They suppress such Scriptures; they proscribe them; they forbid the reading of them in the vernacular tongue; they burn them by thousands; they say unto God, Depart from us; and to his ministers, "Speak unto us smooth things; prophecy unto us deceits." They are inveterate enemies of these great truths, because these truths themselves make exhibitions of God such as the carnal mind has no delight in. They enforce claims which such a mind does not admit. They demand the sacrifices of its idols; they subject it to trials it cannot think of encountering. They would fain pull down and demolish the stately edifice of its pride; subdue its will to the will of the Great Supreme; and do actually throw all its interests and itself into the hands of God, as the clay is in the hands of the potter.

Hence the war—the bitter war, the everlasting war. They often so lash and scourge the sinner, that he is conscious of the conflict. His reason is enlisted against them; he summons all the powers of argument to show that they are not found in the Bible; and if found there, cannot be true; and if true, free him from his obligations. But above all, is his heart enlisted against them. He complains that he has a hard master. He rebels and replies against God; and with the sinners of other times demands, "Who hath resisted his will?" There is no one of these great truths that accommodates itself to the wishes of men. They ever have been,

and still are obnoxious, nay, nauseating truths. With all their boasted liberality, the most liberal are dissatisfied with them; nor is it any small cause of offence to them, that they are received by others. They are tolerant of error, but they have no tolerance for such truths as these. They have charity for all, for everything save these, and such as these. These are the truths for which they stoned the prophets, killed the apostles, and crucified the Lord of glory. These are the truths for which so many thousands have been burnt at the stake, and languished in dungeons, and been driven from among men like beasts of prey. They are among the severest tests of the moral state of the heart which can be applied to it, and when applied, never fail to indicate its hostility to God and righteousness. It is one of the most painful and self-denying duties imposed on the Christian ministry, to enforce these great truths; because there is not one of them which, when exhibited in its true light, is even tolerable to an earthly mind. Our argument, therefore, is no far-fetched argument. A religion got up by trick and imposture, never could have disclosed such truths. They are "made of sterner stuff" than that which the mind of an impostor would ever have thought of handling. It is impossible they could have been inwoven, ever so artfully, into a false religion. No impostor would ever have thought of palming them upon the world. He would not have ventured thus to expose his system and himself to infuriate hostility. Men do not like such leaders as these; and

no smooth-faced and false-hearted impostor would have jeopardized such a revelation to such a world as this. Can it be conceived that such truths originated with men? Or if men *could* have revealed them, what *inducement* had they to make such a revelation, in opposition to all the favor and influence of those whose favor and kindness an impostor would desire to conciliate? It is puerile to deny that these truths are contained in the Bible; it is madness to suppose they originated with men. The unwelcome character of this class of truths, therefore, will forever stand a living monument of their heavenly origin.

4. The last remark in relation to these truths is, that *they are fatal to the success of that religion of which they compose so important a part, unless it be from God.* A religion which contains so many truths which men hate; truths so honestly and boldly revealed; truths which stand forth so unequivocally, and that are cemented with the deep foundations of Christianity; any impostor must have seen would be absolutely fatal to its extensive propagation in the world. If the Bible had been the work of men, one of the first objects at which its authors would have aimed, would have been to have constructed it in such a manner as not to be abhorrent to the views of its readers. It would seem to be indispensable to the success of such an imposture, not to pursue a course in which it must necessarily encounter vigorous, opposing influences.

One of the strong objections to Christianity of

that champion of infidelity, Lord Herbert, is that it contains what he is pleased to call "disgusting doctrines." The use he would make of this fact is, that the religion of nature is to be preferred to the religion of Christ. The use we would make of it is, that a religion that contains these humbling and self-denying truths, never could have been propounded by an impostor with any hope of thus imposing on the credulity of mankind.

There is no principle more clearly revealed in the Bible, than that if men become converts to its doctrines, they must become so, not by the power of the sword, not by the force of civil enactments, or ecclesiastical influence and authority, but freely, and on sober, deliberate *conviction*. "My son, give me thine heart." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." There was nothing in the learning, or personal influence, either of the prophets of the Old Testament, or the apostles of the New, on which they could rely for the successful propagation of the doctrines they taught. They had no alliance with the power of civil governments; civil governments were opposed to them. They could not promise wealth, station, nor honor to their followers, but the rather, poverty, degradation, and suffering. If they were impostors, their only hope of success was in so framing their system of falsehood that men would naturally and easily fall in with it, and their pliant convictions be secured without any great sacrifice of their natural inclinations. This is the way in which false religions have ever obtained their

partial and temporary ascendancy. The only way in which they can hope for success is, by abstaining from all serious conflict with the prepossessions of men; by forbearing to contend with them; by freely accommodating themselves to their previous habits of thought.

The Scriptures pursue directly the opposite course; they do so deliberately, and with a full view of the difficulties which they must encounter. Instead of anticipating the kind regards and complacency of men, they count on their neglect, their disesteem; they even predict their hostility, their contempt. They have a controversy with men in the very doctrines they teach. "Think not," says Jesus of Nazareth, "that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." In its own nature, his religion is a religion of peace; but it has warring elements to contend with. When we advert to the world to which it is addressed, to the spirit to which it is opposed, to the powers of darkness with which it is professedly brought into collision, we see that it has conflicts. It is the spirit of truth contending with every form of long sanctioned error; the spirit of good contending with the spirit of evil; the spirit of Christ contending with the spirit of the world. It is a remedial process; and in order to be effectual, the remedy is severe. It is a purifying process; there are filthy and stagnant waters that must be disturbed; their very stench must go up, before an unobstructed and clear channel is made for the river of life to run

through. It is a neutralizing process, in which heterogeneous and repulsive elements meet and effervesce, before the inwrought elements of evil in the human heart are worked off. It is not peace, so long as man is the enemy of God, and error is opposed to truth. It is not peace, so long as the "prince of this world" erects his standard, and marshals his legions wherever the proclamation is made for the guilty and the lost to enlist under the banner of the redeeming Saviour.

It is not strange, therefore, that it contains truths which men are at war with. In resisting and repelling its claims, the learned have exhausted their learning, and the scoffing their wit and ridicule; the great and the mighty, their influence and power; while the mass of men to whom these truths have been addressed, have denounced them. It is scarcely conceivable that impostors would have proposed such a system of doctrines. It is impossible that they could have any hope of patronage in so doing. The most presumptuous impostor in the world could not hope, by such teaching, to carry the hearts of men. He must have known that such truths would have been everywhere spoken against, provoked opposition and obloquy, and been subversive of his object. It is absurd to suppose that an impostor would invent a religion, towards which the human heart exhibits such a morbid and hostile sensitiveness, that instead of falling in with it, it should uniformly fall out with it. Such a religion, instead of finding friends and patrons, would not find a nook or corner

in the natural heart of man, where it would be greeted with an honest welcome.

If the writers of the Scriptures were impostors, not only was their enterprise desperate, but they must have foreseen it would be so. They might as well have undertaken to build a city on the waves of the ocean, as have hoped to establish such a religion in the hearts of men and in this apostate world, unless it were from God. The human heart never would have submitted to such truths as these, had they not come from God. No more than the ancient Hebrews would have submitted to have been conducted by Moses, unless God had been with him; no more than they would have submitted to their burdensome rites and ceremonies, their costly sacrifices and oblations, unless they had been of Divine appointment; no more than they would have consented to their reluctant invasion of the land of Canaan, and their slaughter of its inhabitants, unless they had been commanded, and scourged, and forced to it by the God of heaven—would such truths as those of which we have spoken have found a dwelling among men, had they not carried with them the evidence that they were not of human invention, but the truth of God. No more than Moses, if he had been an impostor, could have enforced his own personal authority upon the stiff-necked and rebellious Jews, could prophets and apostles, in revealing and enforcing such truths, have hoped for the least success, had they not come to men with the convincing demonstration that they came in the name,

and by the authority, of the great God. Just as Moses found it necessary to demonstrate his divine legation by signs and wonders, and by that memorable series of miracles, both of judgment and mercy ; did the prophets and the apostles find it necessary to establish their commission by similar miracles, and thus give these unwelcome truths the sanction of God's presence and authority.

The reason why these, and similar truths, are *not* fatal to the successful propagation of Christianity, is not that men naturally love them ; it is because they are not of human origin, and are associated with the mighty power of their Divine Author, giving all their splendid triumphs to truth and principle. If they are the life and vigor of Christianity, it is because they are " the wisdom of God, and the power of God." Upon the hypothesis that Christianity is a work of human invention, it is impossible to account for the fact, that it has triumphed over such internal obstacles. So far from possessing anything in common with the spirit and tendency of human nature, it is diametrically opposed to them ; they are jarring, warring elements, nor do they come in contact without coming into a collision, in which the one or the other is the complete victor. Never was a system less conciliating to the human heart, or less accommodating to the deep-rooted prejudices of men. Never could it have found a resting place in the bosom of Jew or Gentile, had it not been associated with the power of God. Jewish Pharisees, and heathen sages, would never have be-

come converts to it, had it been a mere human production. It despoiled them of everything—their self-confidence, their public veneration, their wealth, their honors, their offices, and their employments; nor did any of them embrace it but at the expense of all that the world holds dear. It is because it was clothed with a divine commission, and came as the power of God to salvation, that in the hands of men who themselves were looked upon as the off-scouring of their race, it made its way through the world; and contrary to all the forebodings of its enemies, and all the laws of a merely human probability, it became the religion of the lofty and the humble, of provinces and kingdoms, till it effected the most extraordinary revolution in human affairs, was revered by the common people, and enthroned in the palaces of princes. Its triumphs were triumphs over ignorance and knowledge, idolatry and superstition, power and weakness—in a word, over all the vices and all the passions of men, in those unholy combinations which gave a new direction to human thought, and exerted a paramount influence over all the secret springs of human conduct.

When the Founder of Christianity had completed his great work on the earth, and was about to return to the heaven from which he came, he left these and other kindred truths as the great moral machinery by which his kingdom was to be established. He had accomplished all that was necessary to be accomplished by his incarnation and

death, and it only remained for him to give directions to his followers for the wise and successful conduct of this great enterprise in all future time. It is a beautiful view which here presents itself. It was his last direction ; it was all he had to utter for the guidance of future ages. And what was it that he uttered ? “ Go ye into all the world, and *preach the Gospel* to every creature.” The instrumentality on which he relied for the progressive renovation of the world, was no other than the *truths of his Gospel*. He knew how unwelcome they were, and would be to the heart of man ; but his language was, *Go and preach them*. He knew that the “ heathen would rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ;” he knew that these truths would be “ despised and rejected of men,” a “ stone of stumbling and rock of offence :” still this was his language, *Go and preach them*. He knew that they would be “ a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed ;” he knew that they would be “ seen and hated,” “ hated without a cause ;” but his only direction was, *Go and preach them*. He knew that they would encounter the sophisms of unbelief, the contempt and scorn, the unrelenting hostility, and the infuriate rage of a world that lieth in wickedness ; but he did not modify the injunction, *Go and preach them*. He knew that different ages of the world, and different communities, would express their hostility to them in different forms. He knew that they would be subject to a chilling neglect and indifference, and

a disheartening formality and worldliness; and he knew also that there would be seasons when hatred would be added to indifference, indignity to hatred; when persecution would erect her gibbet, set up her rack, and light her fires; yet, *Go and preach them*, was his unaltered command. But because he knew these things, he did not leave them to prosecute the work alone. No: the gates of hell would let out their legions, to quench their rage in the blood of the saints: truths that would provoke such enmity could be effectual only as they were associated with the power of their Divine Author: and though he altered not, relaxed not the command, *Go preach*, he superadded the promise, "*Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the world.*" Never, if he were an impostor, did he act so weak a part as when he uttered such words as these. They were words, which to the eye of sense it was impossible to fulfil. If his immediate disciples might ever have been tempted to look upon him as a vile deceiver, it was then.

But he was no deceiver. Christianity is true; and he "who liveth and was dead, and is alive forevermore," is with Christianity. As a system of truth, she is prepared for this collision with an opposing world. She looked for it then; she looks for it still. She meant to be the aggressor; this aggressive character has marked her entire progress. But it was then, and it is still, with the assured confidence, that though the pen and the sword would be wielded against her, and her progress

would be through deep waters, she would ultimately triumph.

Such is the argument, however imperfectly illustrated, for the divine origin of the Scriptures, from the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines they reveal. We have seen what these doctrines are, not in the form of any human expositions, but in the language of the Bible itself. We have seen the frankness, the unreserved honesty and boldness with which they are revealed. We have seen the prominent place they occupy in the sacred pages. We have seen how unwelcome and obnoxious they are to the human heart, and how absolutely fatal they are to the success of any system of religion that has not God for its author. We leave every fair and ingenuous mind to decide, whether an impostor would have been stupid enough to have inculcated such truths; and whether a religion, so humbling, that, had it been false, it could not have survived one poor hour, is not of God. Truths so opposed to the prejudices of men, so much at war with human selfishness and pride, could never have been of human invention. It is irrational to suppose that any man, or set of men, any one impostor, or succession of impostors, would have concocted a system of truths to which the human mind is, and ever has been, so hostile. These great doctrines of grace, so humbling to the sinner, and giving as they do all the glory to God, fully and faithfully exhibited and enforced, must be regarded as among the strong proofs of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

The infidelity of the present age seems sensible of this, and betrays its weakness, and at the same time its subtilty, by assailing not so much the truth and authenticity of Christianity, as, by its altered mode of warfare, assailing these great and essential truths. Demolish these, and Christianity is no more. It is conceding too much to infidels to allow them to believe the Bible, and at the same time reject its fundamental truths. "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." It is conceding too much for our argument to blink these truths. One of the best arguments for the divine origin of the Scriptures, will be found in a fearless exhibition of all their peculiar doctrines. The bold outlines, the energetic truths of the Bible, are essential to a clear and impressive statement of the argument itself. There are deep and difficult truths revealed in this Book of God, which some writers of great ability have taken leave to suppress; while the little which their argument gains in popularity by so doing, it loses in strength. To overlook them is but presenting the argument shorn of its glory. They are the key which introduces the reader to this temple of truth; shows its symmetry, strength, and beauty, and indicates its Divine Builder. An impartial and thinking reader, in inspecting the treatises to which we refer, cannot help feeling that their authors were embarrassed by their hesitation to give prominence to the great and distinguishing doctrines of supernatural revelation.

That men do not like these doctrines is no rea-

son why they should not have a place in the argument, but a weighty reason why they ought not to be suppressed. The argument needs the augmented force of these doctrines; it is an emasculated argument without them. Without them, the evidence of its divine origin, that is inherent in the Bible itself, is essentially defective. To my own mind it seems as if the man who rejects these, must reject the Bible itself; without them, it is very little in advance of natural religion. Let a man call in question the infinite holiness and sovereignty of God; let him deny his comprehensive purposes; let him reject the Divinity and Atonement of Christ, and the sovereign and special influences of the Spirit in renewing and sanctifying the people of God; let him discard the essential difference between the righteous and the wicked, and suspend in an obscure and dubious atmosphere the doctrine of future and eternal rewards and punishments, and wherein will his Christianity differ from that of modern neologists? The true method of exhibiting the self-evidencing power of the Scriptures, is by faithfully unfolding "the whole mind of God." Then only does the supreme intelligence of its Author exhibit itself, and his infinite greatness and goodness shine forth in tracing out new paths of thought, and opening channels of affection, never discovered by human reason. Infidelity is perpetually changing its form. The truths which some modern infidels profess to learn from the Bible, Gibbon, Hume and Paine, learned from the light of nature. The same objections which these

bold and old-fashioned infidels urged against the Bible itself, modern neologists urge against these great and essential truths. These ancient and modern opposers of God's truth are in closer alliance than the latter are willing to acknowledge ; they are fellow-laborers in the same calling. It is no uncommon complaint from certain sources, that these great truths make men infidels, while they only show them to be so. Modern infidels have no quarrel with Christianity, when expurgated of these distinctive doctrines ; for as long as these doctrines remain, they proclaim their Author to be Divine.

CHAPTER V.

THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE A PROOF OF ITS
DIVINE ORIGIN.

To a being born for immortality, it is in every view an inquiry of the first importance, whether he possesses *true religion*. If he does possess it, the final termination of his earthly career will be a glorious issue. "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away." Every consideration in the universe may well lead such a man to triumph. "The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

But in deciding the question, whether he possesses true religion, he must first decide *what true religion is*. On this point there is no small diversity of opinion throughout this wide world. There is the religion of Infidelity, as it exists in Christian lands; there is the religion of Nature and tradition, in all the forms of polytheism and pagan idolatry; there is the religion of Mahomed; there is the religion of the Chinese philosopher Confucius; there is the religion of Buddhism, prevailing throughout the Bur-

man empire and all the countries between Bengal and China ; and there are, to a great extent, other religions in different nations and tribes of men. It will hardly be contended that any of those just specified are worthy of confidence. Every one of them, to a greater or less extent, is a system of *idolatry*, unless it be the religion of Mahomed ; and it has often been shown, that in those particulars in which the religion of the Koran has preëminence above paganism, it has borrowed its features from the Sacred Writings.

The word *religion*, in its broadest and most comprehensive sense, is any system of faith and worship. In this sense, the word comprehends the belief and worship of all ages, all nations, all climes, which recognize a superior power, or powers, which govern the world. Every religion has its peculiarities ; and from its peculiarities we learn whether it is of human, or Divine origin.

In addition to the religions above mentioned, there is THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE ;—a religion which is there taught, there delineated, and there exemplified ; and one which is found nowhere else, save where the Bible exerts its influence on the human character. I propose in the present chapter to institute the inquiry, if THE RELIGION *that is delineated in the Bible, be not proof of its Divine origin ?*

This religion is not revealed equivocally, or darkly, or partially ; but stands forth prominently to the inspection of every reader. Every man who has the Bible in his hands, can see it and understand what it is. What then are its leading characteristics,

and what is the evidence they furnish that the author of such a religion is the God of heaven?

It is important to our argument to remark, that in this inquiry we go not beyond the instructions of the Bible itself. The question is not, what was the religion of the early Christian fathers; nor what was the religion of the dark ages; nor what the religion of the reformed churches; nor what is *your* religion, or *my* religion; but what is the *religion of the Bible*? It is equally important also to bear in mind, that we do not here institute the inquiry, what is the religion which the Bible *requires*; for this we have already done in a preceding chapter; but, what is the religion which the Bible *delineates and exemplifies*? The religion which the Bible *requires*, and the religion which it actually *produces*, may not be perfectly identified; while the latter may furnish convincing evidence that it is of Divine, and not of human origin.

1. We remark, then, that the religion delineated and exemplified in the Bible, is a religion *founded in knowledge*. It is not the offspring of ignorance; the basis of it is the knowledge of the truth. Knowledge alone does not constitute it, though without knowledge it does not exist. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and though I understand all mysteries and *all knowledge*, and have not charity, I am nothing." Correct opinions of Christianity do not of themselves insure the existence of Christianity. To understand the truths of the Bible as a system, or science; to be deeply

read and versed in them; to bring to them learning and labor, and even a natural fondness for moral research and disquisition, are not a sufficient pledge of the existence and power of piety in any individual bosom. But while the Bible is faithful in this caution, it at the same time explicitly instructs us, that the knowledge of the truth is indispensable to true godliness. A piety that is the fruit of ignorance, finds no countenance in the Author of this instructive volume, no place in its sacred pages. When it describes the character of an irreligious and ungodly world, it is a community where "there is none that understandeth." When it describes the condition in which all true Christians once were, its language is, "Ye were once darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." It represents them as "turned from darkness to light;" as "brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light;" and as receiving "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Their progress in grace is represented as standing abreast with their progress in knowledge; their upward path as a luminous and bright path. They are represented as "filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Their minds are brought into contact with the truth; their religion is thus a stable and dignified religion; justly entitled to the preëminence of being the "light of the world;" penetrating its regions of gloomy darkness, and ever opening new sources of wonder and praise.

What a preëminence over all other religions,

coarse and low as they once were, and are still ! All false religions require ignorance to sustain them ; ignorance is one of their essential elements. Pagan worship is not based upon the knowledge even of its own religious system. Rude ignorance, and gloomy superstition, form the character of the entire religion of the pagan world. Their “ understanding is darkened ;” they “ worship they know not what :” the inscription on their altars is, “ To the unknown God.” The wisest of the heathen philosophers were the very persons who most deeply felt, and most bitterly bewailed their ignorance on all moral subjects. Cicero tells us, that there was a class of religious teachers in Rome, who could never look into one another’s faces without laughing ; so deep was their consciousness that their teachings were preposterous. Reason and common sense are actually scandalized by their absurdities. Men are shut out from all that is worthy of the name of religion, so long as they are cut off from the knowledge of the truth. The religion of the Bible is the religion of light. God is the source of light ; himself “ the Father of lights ;” and it will forever remain among the evidences in favor of the divine origin of the Scriptures, that the religion they inculcate is learned by studying the lessons of unequalled wisdom.

2. Another fact in relation to the religion of the Bible is, that *it is the religion of the heart*. It is an inward religion, and not the religion of mere outward forms. Its work is not done when it has enlightened the understanding. It consists in “ re-

ceiving the truth in the *love* of it." Its object is to carry the heart; to impart efficacy to right moral principles; to control the affections, as well as the understanding; and to infuse into the soul a measure of the moral excellence of its Author. It does not overlook the forms of piety, but they are so few and simple as to become the natural and unstudied expressions of it, and are valued only as they are expressions of the internal spirit. There is no characteristic of the religion of the Bible more universally, or uniformly inculcated, than this. It everywhere insists upon right intentions as indispensable to the performance of any and every duty. It looks to the springs of action. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." To every other religious service its withering rebuke is, "Who hath required this at your hands?" However fair the outward appearance, it makes no account of the most fair and unblemished exterior, unless it flows from right principles and impulses.

And what are these principles and impulses? The first great article of all religion is that which regulates the affections towards the object of its worship. True religion is founded in the relation which men sustain towards the Supreme Being. In this respect, the religion of the Bible is an intelligent and effective religion. It begins with God. The most compendious expression of it consists in *love to God*. This ruling affection of Heaven is here represented as the ruling passion of good men on the

earth. A sense of duty does much towards forming the religious character required by the Bible ; but love to God does more. Where it exists at all, it is the strongest affection the soul ever exercises. There are almost endless ramifications of this radical principle, branching out in emotions, which, while they have a specific, partake of the same generic character.

Sometimes they assume the form of holy fear and reverence ; and then their language is, “ Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy !”

Sometimes it is the form of *confidence* ; a confidence which gathers strength from every new view of the Divine character, and every fresh experience and conviction of his illimitable resources of wisdom, power and love. All the imagery of nature seems to be put in requisition, in order to furnish appropriate emblems of God’s excellence, or a fitting expression of their confidence in him. “ The Lord God is a *sun* and *shield* ; he will give grace and glory ; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” Image after image is multiplied, and they crowd upon one another as though the thoughts and affections could not find utterance. “ The Lord is my *Rock*, and my *Fortress*, and my *Deliverer* ; my *God*, my *Strength*, in whom I will trust ; my *buckler*, and the *horn of my salvation*, and my *high tower* !”

Sometimes these emotions rise to *joy and transport*, and the subjects of them are heard to say, “ I

will rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel :” “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord ; my soul shall be joyful in my God.” Then again, breaking out in ecstasies of joy, they sing, “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things ; and blessed be his glorious name forever ; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory : Amen and amen !” And then, as though their own lips were mute, and their praise too inexpressive, they invoke all inanimate nature as well as “everything that hath breath,” to the delightful employment of praising God.

If from these emotions towards God, we advert to those which the Bible describes *towards sin, and the character of men as sinners*, we discover a spirit that is altogether peculiar to the piety there delineated. There is something strongly marked in those religious emotions which good men are here represented as exercising in view of their own personal vileness. They imply the hatred of sin on account of its own intrinsic turpitude ; sorrow for it as committed against God ; unfeigned self-abasement because it is a violation of his law ; and turning from it unto God, through Jesus Christ. “O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God ; for our iniquities have increased over our head, and our trespass has grown up unto the heavens.” “O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day.” “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight : that thou mightest be justified

when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.”
“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear ; but now mine eye seeth thee : wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Another peculiarity in these inward principles and impulses, is the *faith* which the Scriptures exemplify. They speak largely of a principle of conduct, a strong internal affection, which consists in an affectionate and active confidence in the veracity and promise of God. There are things apprehended and rested upon by the faith of the Bible, which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man.” It is a faith which realizes the existence of the only living and true God in the grandeur and glory of his creation, in the wisdom, goodness, and power of his providence, and in the method and work of his grace. It recognizes him everywhere and in all things ; everywhere seeing and enjoying him ; everywhere walking with him, hearing a voice which nothing else hears, seeing a hand which nothing else can see, and discovering that heart of Infinite love which nothing else discovers.

There is no burden of sin from which the faith of the Bible does not deliver ; no fear it does not dissipate ; no spiritual enemy it does not subdue ; no indifference and coldness it does not supersede by the fervor of a glowing love. To the mind that exercises it, it is the bond of affiance between the creature and the Creator, the sinner and his Redeemer, the death of time and the life of eternity,

the grave and the resurrection, this low earth and the heaven where he expects to dwell. It is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." It is his strength in weakness, his courage in difficulty, his victory over the world. It lives under the light of God's countenance; it dwells near his throne of grace; it endures as seeing him who is invisible. To repeat its language, its assurance, its triumphs, as they are recorded in the Bible, would be to recite no small portion of the entire Scriptures.

Such are the principles and impulses of the religion delineated in the Scriptures. They form its heart and soul; and "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him."

Now we affirm that such a religion never was of human origin. Human religions, all the world over, have respect to the garb and manners of piety, rather than to its spirit and soul. They know nothing of the heart and inward life, but are made up of outward rites and ceremonies. Ponderous volumes have been written with the view of illustrating them; but they consist of historical annotations and curious discourses upon the ceremonies and religious customs of the various heathen nations. Motives are not at all essential to the religious character, and even the *perfection*, of their rites. There is not to be found in all the records of false religions, one such sentiment as this: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." Their prayers are vain repetitions to some imaginary

deity; their most meritorious acts are bathing in some hallowed river, or with a fool-hardy and vain-glorious exultation, inflicting some cruel torture on their own bodies. If we inquire what their affections are towards God, they are "without God in the world." They had gods enough; they had them by thousands; but what emotions did they inspire, and to what heart religion did they impel the worshippers at their altars? You seek for *religion* among them, and what do you see? Piety, reverence, love, hope, confidence, joy? No: none of these; but bacchanalian revels, and every form and degree of disgusting abomination. We do, indeed, read of fearful terrors of conscience among them; but where do we find any just views of sin, and of that inward repentance which produces outward reformation? We read of reason and philosophy, but in vain do we look for the faith that purifies the heart and works by love. Proud reason knows nothing of it. It never learned to "become a fool, that it might be wise." It is not found in pagan lands. Pagan philosophy is a stranger to the simplicity, the ardor, the strength of its confidence. The works of nature do not warrant such a faith; reason does not discover the foundations of it; conscience, benighted, wounded, does not even conjecture that there is balm for all her wounds, and light for her midnight darkness.

Religions that are thus exhausted in outward rites, and never reach the heart, may well be of human origin. The religion of the Bible is alto-

gether a different religion. Apart from the religion here delineated, and the religion of which this Book is the source, there is no such heart religion in the world, nor has there ever been any such. Men who make their own gods, and make them conformable to their own practices and inclinations, can easily make their own religion. But the God of the Bible is not the work of men's hands, nor is the religion of the Bible of this low origin.

3. Another characteristic of the religion of the Bible is its *unearthly tendency*. This is a feature which gives coloring and character to the whole religious landscape there portrayed. There is a purity and loftiness of sentiment in the Bible, a heavenward tendency and unearthliness in the best affections it delineates, which cannot be overlooked by the attentive reader of its pages, and which cannot be mistaken for an earth-born religion. This Book alone makes a due estimate of the things that are seen and the things that are unseen. It has eternity for its object; nor can the religious character it produces be understood, save as it is directed towards invisible and eternal realities, and becomes progressively amalgamated with them.

In all its exemplifications of piety, we find this state of mind holding an observable prominence. The sensual bias and tendency are here counteracted, and a spiritual and heavenly one imparted and sustained. The mind is gradually liberated from the degrading and disloyal thralldom of earth, and willingly, cheerfully made subject to what is

“incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.” False estimates of this world are here rectified; heaven is the mark towards which all its disciples are represented as pressing forward; the governing principle of their desires and conduct is their preference of the future to the present; and the conflict in which they are employed involves an habitual resistance to the usurpations of earth. They are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” having here “no continuing city.” With Moses, they “choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; for they have respect to the recompense of reward.” With Paul they can say, “I reckon the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Often did they look upon the world with weariness, and even sadness; often had they a “desire to depart and be with Christ;” while they might sometimes be heard to say, “O that I had wings like a dove; for then would I fly away, and be at rest!”

We affirm that such a religion is not of earth. Men never devised it. Their uniform character shows that such a religion is unnatural to them. All experience and observation show, that men have always inverted the true order of things, by putting that first which should be last, and that last which should be first. The Bible alone aims at suppressing and subverting this anarchy, by restoring the dominion of the spiritual and superior over the inferior and the sensual. This misrule is here arrested

and broken, and in a process of decay and dissolution. But it is not a natural process to man, and does not fall in with any of the religions of his devising. That single sentence, "Wherefore, come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty," is itself proof of a religion of unearthly origin. The memoirs of men in all lands where the Bible is not known, or where it is rejected, or where it is not obeyed, furnish no examples of such a religion. Paganism has no such biography, because it has no such heaven-descended principles. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." No school of philosophy ever trained up a single pupil thus, or ever thus taught the world. Men are not accustomed to such a religion, even in thought; they are ignorant of it; nor is there any original portrait of it, save in that Book of which the Spirit of God is the Author.

4. Another characteristic of the religion of the Bible is, that it is a *progressive and growing religion*. Just as in the world of nature there is first the blade, then the stalk, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear; just as in the kingdom of Providence nations and all their improvements, from small beginnings, increase, and become enlarged and extended; just as the little infant from a helpless babe becomes a vigorous youth, and then comes to matured and

well-informed manhood—so the religion of the Bible, both in the heart of man, and in the world, from its resemblance to a grain of mustard-seed, comes to resemble an overshadowing and fruitful tree; and from a babe in knowledge and grace, reaches the “measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” By nature, the soul is “dead in trespasses and sins.” On the first communication of spiritual life, its pulse is feeble and languid, its perceptions are obscure, and it is “a day of small things.” But he “who begins this work, performs it until the day of Jesus Christ.” The promise, the love, and the power of God are pledged to carry it forward. Its growth is slow, but by and by it becomes vigorous and strong. The spiritual appetite becomes healthful and manly; it hungers and thirsts after righteousness; and the new-born babe, who once desired the sincere milk of the word, has now become like those who have need of strong meat.

It is not a mere miniature sketch of the Divine likeness, that the child of God always bears; but one whose features are destined to stand out in bold relief, and more and more like a full and beautifully adorned portrait. His path is like the rising light, which “shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” He “flourishes like the palm-tree, and grows like the cedar in Lebanon.” He “grows in grace and in knowledge,” “following on to know the Lord,” increasing in the spirituality of his affections and in the uniformity of his obedience. He possesses a growing congeniality with the mind and

will of God, in his ascending progress he has no appointed place of rest; nor does he stop in his career, nor is he satisfied, until he awakes in the perfect likeness of his God and Saviour.

This is a most beautiful characteristic of the religion of the Bible, and found nowhere else save in Bible religion. The world is full of religion, but it is not such a religion. There is arrested attention, and awakened thought in Christian lands, where there is no growing piety. There is deep conviction, and agitating fear, where there is no growing piety. There are transient hope and momentary joy, and the cloud-like goodness of Ephraim that passeth away, where there is no growing piety. There are hypocritical professions, where there is no piety at heart, because there is none that is permanent and growing. There is the semblance of religion in lands that are not Christian; lands that are enticed by the lying wonders of the Man of Sin; lands that are covered with the veil of Mahomedan imposture; lands that have no other influences than the glimmerings of natural reason; but it does not shine out with a less varying and more increasing light. It is like the path of the meteor, which no laws of the moral world can trace. It is like the sudden flash of the lightning, which, when it is over, leaves the sky in deeper darkness. It has no perception of truth; no nice discrimination of motives; no tenderness of conscience; no steady and growing exhibition of excellence. It is like the piety of a few thinking and thoughtful minds in the

pagan world ; like the dreams of Socrates, or the hopes of Plato, or the morals of Seneca ; it is a sudden scintillation, or it may be coruscation, of moral sentiment : we see it for the moment, but we look again, and it is gone ; it is all darkness, death, and sin. It is not the religion of the Bible, because it is not of God.

5. It is also a remarkable feature of the religion of the Bible, and one which has no unimportant place in our argument, that with all these excellencies which we have mentioned, the religion which was possessed by the saints of the Old and New Testament is represented in the Bible as *an imperfect religion*. It professes to be so ; and it is an interesting fact that it makes this open and unembarrassed avowal.

We might naturally suppose that a religion that comes from God is a perfect religion. This religion itself *is* a perfect religion ; but the votaries of it are not perfect. When infidels impugn the religion exemplified in the Scriptures, because it is not sinless ; when they point to the sins of good men, as their character is delineated in the Scriptures, and exultingly demand, Can such a religion be from God ? we reply to these sneers, that this is just what the Scriptures themselves would lead us to look for. The Bible itself teaches us, that there is no such thing as a sinless religion among men. It does indeed *require* a perfect religion. There is no abatement of the binding *precept*, no relaxation of the injunction, “ Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven

is perfect.” If this Book did not teach us that it is the *duty* of men to become perfect, it would furnish a good and solid reason for wickedness ; and in this fact alone, would carry on the face of it conclusive evidence that it is not of divine origin.

It is in its own nature fitted to produce a perfect religion. It is itself a perfect system of truth and duty, and did men perfectly obey it, their religion would be perfect. But it nowhere *delineates and exemplifies* a perfect religion in the character and conduct of men. It does not in Abraham ; nor in Lot ; nor in Moses ; nor in Aaron ; nor in David, in Jeremiah, in Peter, in Paul, nor in any of the characters to which it attributes such high and commanding moral excellencies. It teaches unequivocally, that if we say we *have no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and “the truth is not in us.” The best men of whom it speaks are described as imperfect men ; the most splendid examples of heaven-born piety are there represented as obscured by imperfection. The saints of the Old and New Testaments had sins to confess and bewail ; sins to struggle with and declensions to mourn over ; sins that made them feel their dependence, and drove them to the throne for grace to help in the time of need ; and sins that filled them with self-abasement and humiliation. The Bible makes us acquainted with just such a religion as in fact exists, and as is possessed by all true Christians in every age of the world. What if it had been otherwise, and the Christians they describe were all of such high attainments as to be

sinless and perfect? How ill-befitting had such a book been as a revelation from God to fallen man! How withering to the hopes of the best of men, to be driven to the conclusion that they have no religion at all, because they have not a perfect and sinless religion! How discordant with facts as existing in the entire history of good men, had such a revelation been! How untrue! How false, and unworthy of credit! There is wisdom, there is truth in a revelation that delineates human goodness as imperfect, and portrays it just as it is—wisdom and truth, of which God alone is the Author.

It were easy to enlarge on the peculiar nature of the religion of the Bible, and in every one of its characteristics point out the evidence of its divine origin. Its thousand topics of thought, thought which enters into the religious character of which it speaks, are topics such as no uninspired mind would have originated. Its jealous God, and yet its God of condescending mercy—its way of life and its way of death—its Christian's prospect and its Christian's retrospect—his wounded spirit caused and cured—his self-suspicion and his confidence—his spiritual participation of Christ, and his consequent exposure to the hostility of the world—his watchfulness and his faithfulness—the expansive tendency of his religion, and yet his peculiar fellowship with the community of the faithful—his enemies and his conquests—God dwelling in him, and he in God—all these, and other kindred topics, evince the religion

of the Bible to be one of higher than any earthly parentage.

The process too by which the religious character described in the Bible is formed, is there distinctly marked out. It is a resurrection from the death of sin; a moral renovation, a new creation by the mighty power of God. It is not the production of nature; it is not the effect of moral suasion; it is not superinduced by human ingenuity, or human discipline; but originates, and is wrought out in all its parts by the grace and power of God. It is a beautiful and noble moral structure, ornate and heavenly, whose builder and maker is the Holy One, who is the Author of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. For such a religion we fearlessly make the demand, Is it from Heaven, or is it of men? Can the Book which reveals it be a forgery? Does it disclose the heart and hand of an impostor? Did men ever originate such a religion as this? Can there be a doubt of its divine origin?

It were a melancholy fact, if the reader should revise this part of the argument in favor of the divine origin of the Scriptures with no personal searchings of heart. Does he possess this religion; a religion based on the knowledge of the truth, yet more than knowledge—a religion not irrespective of form, yet more than form: the religion of love, of reverence, of confidence, of joy in God through Jesus Christ, of repentance and self-abasement, of faith and obedience? Does he possess this spiritual

religion, this growing religion, and though imperfect, this religion which is the fruit of God's Spirit, and which alone can qualify him to dwell within the courts of the New Jerusalem?

If he does, he may well say, "By the grace of God, I am what I am;" if he does not, how can he be happy, how can he be at rest? Is the Bible fabulous? Are its truths fabulous? Are its hopes fabulous? Is its religion fabulous? Ah, no. There is nothing fabulous about this Book of God. God himself is no fable. It is no fable that men have incurred his displeasure. The eternity to which they are bound is no fable. Heaven and hell are no fables.

CHAPTER VI.

THE UNITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THE argument to which the reader's attention is now directed, is the agreement or concord of Scripture with itself, or the consent of all its parts.

It may at the outset be questioned, whether the fact that a book is consistent with itself, be a proof of its divine original? The question is not out of place; it is a fair question. While it is true that writers whose works are voluminous, who have written largely on various subjects, or on different departments of the same subject, and more especially if their works have employed a long series of years, and been published at long intervals, are very apt to slide into some incoherencies, if not some downright and palpable contradictions; yet must it be conceded, that there are human authors who are uniformly and always consistent with themselves. The *mere* circumstance, therefore, that the Bible is consistent with itself, is a slender basis on which to found an argument for its divine original, if we at the same time take not into consideration the nature of this consistency, and the circumstances which render it, not to say improbable, but impossible, unless the writers of it were directed by more than human wis-

dom. Our design is to show that there exists this agreement of the Scripture with itself; that there is something in the nature of this agreement, which makes it such a moral phenomenon, that it never could have taken place in the history of uninspired men; that the circumstances of it are such as to justify and demand the conclusion, that it is an expression of His mind and will, "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

We will direct our thoughts to **THE REALITY AND NATURE OF THIS AGREEMENT**, as it appears in the facts that are narrated in the Bible; in the representations there made of religious truth; in the harmony which exists between the principles which it reveals, the emotions it inculcates, and the outward conduct which flows from them; and in the unity between the Old and New Testaments.

1. As the basis of our argument we affirm, in the first place, that there is a remarkable agreement in the *facts* that are narrated in the Scriptures. The arguments of infidels against the Bible as a divine revelation, almost, if not always, relate to *matters of fact* stated in the sacred volume. The reasons for this probably are, that the facts therein stated are so numerous, that it would require the life of the most diligent student to investigate them minutely; and that apparent discrepancies in little matters, which time and patient research easily reconcile, embolden the infidel in a temporary triumph.

It were impossible, in a single chapter, to do more than make it appear that the Scriptures are

consistent with themselves in the *great facts* which lie at the basis of the religion which they reveal; which have an inseparable connection with all its peculiar doctrines, an influence upon all its precepts, and which give Christianity its distinguishing character and importance. There are such facts. They are, the creation of the world—the descent of the human family from one common pair—the universal deluge—the division of the earth among the sons of Noah—the confusion of tongues—the calling of Abraham and the origin of the Hebrew state—the destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain—the severance of the race of Ishmael from their common progenitor—the bondage and deliverance of the children of Israel in Egypt—the giving of the moral and ceremonial law on Sinai—the pilgrimage through the wilderness—the possession of the promised land—the character of the Jews under the dynasty of the judges and the reign of the kings—the service of the temple—the revolt of the ten tribes—the exile and the return from Babylon—the nation and the family from which the Messiah descended—his miraculous birth, his peculiar character, his preaching, his propitiatory sufferings and death, his burial and his resurrection—his commission to his apostles to preach the Gospel—his ascension into heaven—the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the organization of the Christian church.

If there is a perfect agreement in the sacred writers in their statement of these great facts, then, so far as this statement goes, there is no discrepancy

in the great system of which these facts form the basis. In things of minor moment, there may be seeming discrepancy in the different narrators ; but it is discrepancy which disappears on a more minute examination ; and even though it does not at once disappear, ought, upon all principles of fair reasoning, to be attributed to other causes than the mistake of the original narrator.

Of these great facts the sacred writers furnish a perfectly harmonious account. The earliest of them wrote subsequently to some of these events ; some of them wrote subsequently to them all ; while most of those who wrote subsequently to all, or a part of them, make frequent and explicit reference to the whole. Whether their statements be more or less full, or their references more or less incidental, there is no positive discrepancy in any of them. It would require a volume to illustrate these remarks : we must rely on the reader's acquaintance with the Scriptures for their illustration. Any man familiar with the Sacred Writings, will see the force of this argument.

The statement of David, for example, is in harmony with that of Moses ; the narrative of Peter, and Stephen, and the allusions of Paul, do not contradict the narrative of any of the narrators who preceded them. David celebrates in poetry, what Moses records as a historian ; while Stephen, and Peter, and Paul, urge in argument the same facts that are recorded by the historian's pen and sung by the prophet's lyre. The historical parts of the New

Testament, as well as the Old, are in perfect coincidence with the more didactic and doctrinal parts. The epistles of Paul, so full of minute specifications, so replete with allusions to times, places, persons, and events; and written with all the freedom of epistolary correspondence, and without any regard to the order of events; are found to discover a minute coincidence with the more extended and exact history given by Luke in the book of the "Acts of the Apostles."

The statements of the four evangelists, though at a great remove from studied uniformity, are, in regard to the great facts on which Christianity is founded, perfectly harmonious statements. The apparent inconsistencies vanish on close inspection, and the harmony becomes more obvious and striking from the very apparent discrepancies, because they show the entire absence of all collusion. There is a difference in their narratives, but they differ without being contradictory. One gives a more full statement than another; one writes in chronological order, another inweaves facts as they suit his purpose, and without regard to date; one writes to a different people, and with a different object from another, and therefore presents the facts with a different phase and complexion; one traces the genealogy of the Saviour through the line of Mary, and another through the line of Joseph; one specifies a distant ancestor by one name, and another by another; and on inquiry, it is ascertained that he was identified with both.

In some of the genealogical tables there is an apparent discrepancy, arising from the fact, that one writer records the genealogy according to the Hebrew usage, reckoning the descendants by the males only ; while another, not regarding this genealogical precision, includes both the male and the female descendants. The most serious discrepancies relate to numbers ; in regard to which, it would be marvellous if none, of all the transcribers, had fallen into any error. The alleged contradictions, on which infidelity so triumphantly relies, are almost all of this character. But critical investigation, and faithful research, have again and again refuted them.

The original manuscripts in which the sacred Books were written, have all long since crumbled away, or been destroyed ; and for a long series of years, and until the invention of the art of printing, were handed down from generation to generation, by the tedious process of transcribing with the pen. Even the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament now in existence, were made many centuries after the loss of the originals. Amid the ten thousand copies, from the days of Moses to the present day, it is matter for grateful admiration, that we now possess, in the original languages in which they were written, the substantial Scriptures, as they were dictated by Infinite wisdom. Proof readers, and those who are in the habit of correcting the press, cannot fail to feel the relevancy and importance of these observations.

God has provided for the preservation of the unadulterated Scriptures, by having thus preserved them in the original languages in which they were written. Living language is continually fluctuating : dead languages are unchangeable. We cannot sufficiently adore the superintending and vigilant care of Divine Providence, in that these writings have been preserved in these languages, and preserved pure. Some transcribers may have given a different spelling to some words from that which is given by others ; some may have misplaced a stop, or inverted a letter, or even misplaced a sentence ; yet is it still the same unadulterated history.

Some things may remain obscure ; but the obscure, so far as they are understood, never contradict those that are plain ; while those that are plain shed light upon those that are obscure. Infidels have not, so far as my knowledge extends, ever undertaken to vitiate the great facts contained in the Scripture narrative. They are too firmly established by impartial and credible witnesses, and too abundantly confirmed by profane history, to be assailed. The most which they have attempted to do, is to charge upon the narrators some minor inconsistencies, which in no way affect the essential harmony of their narrative ; and which, if even unexplained, leave the great fabric of God's truth firm and unimpaired. We have nothing to fear, when they have done their worst ; and when, "after the assault, we count those of its towers that have stood the siege, we shall find that not a tower has fallen."

2. There is also, in the Scriptures, the most perfect unity in all their representations of *religious truth*.

It is allowed by infidels, that there is a stronger apparent harmony between the doctrines of Scripture than the facts. If they do not allow this, we prove it upon them by repeating a remark already made; which is, that their own objections relate, rather to the matters of fact that are stated in the Bible, than to the doctrines it reveals. But this is perfectly the reverse in regard to all human systems. In human systems, the diversity of opinion is much greater than the diversity of facts; the moral disagreement is much greater than the physical, or the historical.

On the subject of religious truth men differ, and ever have differed. No two men in the world, even with the Bible in their hands, could probably now be found, who would write a book on religious subjects as large as the Bible, without expressing different views. Much less could thirty or forty men be found who would perfectly harmonize. Suppose the Bible to be blotted out of existence, and some thirty or forty individuals, scattered through different ages of the world, had written on religious subjects, and their works were comprised in a volume. Who does not see, that such a work would have been the merest theological jargon! Let the wild and incoherent speculations of heathen philosophy, and the thousand varieties of pagan religion, give the answer to this demand.

But while these differences are in fact almost endless, yet it is the great and undeniable characteristic of the Scriptures, that all their instructions are in perfect harmony. Their great object is to impart the knowledge of truth. Truth is the great and only instrumentality they make use of in order to transform, purify, and elevate the human character. No matter how they teach—whether by history, biography, song, allegory, parable, argument, or dogmatic testimony and affirmation—religious truth is so deeply and thoroughly inwoven in all they utter, that it forms the great and essential element in all their instructions. Yet in all their views, from beginning to end, there is the most perfect oneness. No matter what the subject of which they treat, all the writers speak the same thing. They uniformly present the same views. We might specify a chapter of doctrines, even to a minute and detailed confession of faith, and we should find the same unbroken harmony.

The most difficult of all subjects, the one most inaccessible to the minds of men, and the one on which, of all others, the pagan world held notions the most obscure and contradictory, relates to the Divine Being and character. “What,” said the King of Syracuse to Simonides—“what is God?” The poet desired a day to consider the question; on the morrow, he requested two days; and as often as he was called upon for an answer, he doubled the time. And when the king demanded the reason of his conduct, “It is,” replied Simonides, “because

the more I consider the question, the more obscure it appears." Yet this is human—it is enlightened humanity.

The Scriptures never hesitate, never vary when they speak of the infinite and eternal Deity. They utter no dark enigmas; they veil nothing which to creatures can be unveiled; they discourage by no unmingled severities, and flatter by no unmingled mercy; they always and everywhere speak with the same explicitness—they change never. So too of the character of man, and the discovery they make of the way of man's salvation. They everywhere speak of man as fallen by his iniquity; of one Saviour; one way of going to him, one way only in which this salvation becomes ours. Ten thousand are the fancies of other religions, and all as contradictory to one another and themselves, as they are conjectural and false. The sacred writers all point to the one God-man Mediator—the one Root and Offspring of David—the same Fountain of mercy—the same Tree of Life. They uniformly speak the same thing: let their theme be what it will, the teaching of one is the teaching of all.

And not only do they all speak the same doctrine, but the various doctrines they inculcate all agree with each other. They have a mutual dependence and connection; they give one another a reciprocal support and influence; they grow out of each other, and all hang together, alike deriving their ripeness, and freshness, and flavor, from the same parent stock. Let a diligent student take up a copy

of the Scriptures with copious marginal references, and undertake to collate their instructions upon any one doctrine or moral duty, and he will be surprised at the uniformity of their teaching. They never speak for, and against, the same doctrine ; they never bear witness on both sides of any question : nor is there an instance in which they affirm and deny the same thing. That which in reality “ has any Scripture in its favor, has all Scripture in its favor ;” nor is there anything in the Bible against it.

Now we maintain that this is a remarkable fact. It is not an easy matter for a false witness, especially if he has a long story to tell, to agree with himself ; much less will a number of false witnesses, testifying at great length on so many subjects, agree with one another. This were, if possible, a greater miracle than that of divine inspiration. Is this harmony then the result of mere human wisdom, honestly directed ? Is it the effect of fiction or falsehood ? This is more than any sober man can be persuaded to believe. It is contrary to all experience and observation. The human mind is too weak, thus to have settled down upon such a vast amount of unchanging truth ; it is itself too restless and changing ; nor is the instance to be found in the history of our race, in which its views of religious truth possessed such comprehensiveness, consistency, and permanence. We cannot account for this harmony of truth which the sacred Books express, upon any other principle, than that its authors were under the guidance of heavenly wisdom. The thing is

impossible : the supposed cause, that uninspired men were its authors, is not adequate to the effect produced.

3. Turn, now, to the harmony which exists between *the principles which the Bible reveals and the inward emotions it inculcates, and the harmony between these inward emotions and the outward conduct which flows from them.* True religion consists of doctrine, experience and practice ; while in all these respects, it exhibits the most perfect symmetry. There is no inconsistency between its practice and its affections, nor between its affections and its principles. They are all conformed and fitted the one to the other, and form a religion in which the understanding, the heart, and the outward deportment agree. Its religion is like an edifice made up of different parts, but all so perfectly congruous and joined together, that it possesses unequalled strength and beauty. The tendency of its truths is not to destroy, or neutralize, but to excite and sustain that internal state of mind, and those glowing, heavenly affections which it requires ; and the tendency of this internal state of mind, so far from being at war with the external character and conduct which it requires, is the only thing that effectually secures it. The love of Christian truth is never found in minds that are not imbued with Christian truth itself ; while the practice of it is never found where it is not believed and loved. The truths of the Bible, the love of it, and its controlling power over the life—these three things, constitute the Christian

character. Where these three things exist, there is the root, the branches, the fruit—the tree in full bearing. An honest belief in the great truths of Christianity lies at the basis of all holy affections; and holy affections, just in the measure in which they exist in the soul, produce holy obedience.

A man's affections may be inconsistent with the truths which he believes, because it is the cold and reluctant assent which he accords to mere speculative propositions. So may his life be inconsistent with the principles which he *professes* to love; but it cannot be inconsistent with the principles which for the time being he truly loves: it may be at war with the principles that are on his lips, but it cannot be at war with the principles that are in his heart. The religion of the Bible, therefore, is throughout consistent with itself. It is like sweet music, made up of harmonious parts—like the music of heaven, where, though there are ten thousand voices, each voice is not only perfectly melodious in itself, but all the voices are blended in perfect and delightful harmony, without a jarring note, or the faintest discord.

It is not necessary to our argument, that we should prove that this religion is ever perfectly exemplified among men. It is enough if we can show that this is the religion of *the Bible*, and that it is exemplified among men, just in the degree in which men are imbued with the spirit which the Bible inculcates. It has never been perfectly exemplified among men, save in a single instance; and in that

instance, the thoughts of holiness, the love of holiness, and the life of holiness, were expressive of a harmony of character that indicated its divine origin. Believing the truth, loving the truth, and walking in the truth, constitute one religion. Every truth begets its peculiar grace, and every grace its peculiar virtue. With all the teachings of the Bible on the importance of just conceptions of the truth, it does not sever them from their appropriate affections; and with all its teachings on the importance of godliness within, it never severs them from the godliness that is without. From the views it reveals of God, it deduces the affections we owe to him; from the affections we owe to him, it deduces the duties we owe. Prayer and praise, the study of the Scriptures, the worship of the sanctuary, the sanctification of the Lord's day, and the profession of his name before men, and the consecration of time, property and influence to his service, are but the fruits of a true and honest loyalty to him as our sovereign Lord and gracious Redeemer. From the views it reveals of man and the relations men sustain to one another, it deduces the affections we owe to our fellow men; and from the affections we owe to them, it deduces the correlative duties. Truth, integrity, kindness, purity; respect to our superiors, and submission to those who rule over us; condescension to our inferiors, and doing good to all men as we have opportunity—these, and other relative duties, it ingrafts on the parent stock of the same faith and charity. In this respect, everything in

the Bible is perfectly harmonious. And is not this harmony among the indices of its divine origin? Do false religions ever teach thus? Have they ever thus taught? Did ever such a religion originate with weak, fallible, sinful men?

4. In the last place, let us advert to the harmony which exists between *the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*. Four hundred years elapsed between the last prophet of the Old, and the first prophet of the New dispensation. The Old Testament was published to the world long before the New; and in this, as well as some other particulars, they form two distinct volumes, while they profess to be only two distinct series of revelations from the same Divine Author. Infidels have not been wanting in strenuous effort to prove that they are contradictory revelations; that the one condemns what the other justifies; that the former is abrogated by the latter, and that therefore both cannot be from God. There is great ignorance, or great disingenuousness in these assertions, and there may be both. A little reflection will show, that the Jewish revelation is confirmed by the Christian, and the Christian by the Jewish; and that there is the most perfect concord between them both.

It is no objection to the divine origin of the Scriptures, that God did not reveal them to men all at once. It is not pretended that the Old Testament contains a complete and perfect revelation. The expansion or amplification of a principle is not to be brought as an objection to the principle itself.

All the books in the world are but little more than illustrations ; and the most that we can say of them is, that they furnish us with greater advantages for applying what was at first written. The work of God's revelation was a progressive work ; nor is there any more objection to it, on that account, than to the progressive works of creation and providence. God's revelation had its infancy, its youth, its manhood ; and where is the objection to its being born not in all the maturity of its perfected manhood ?

Nor is it an objection to the harmony of which we speak, that parts of the Old are abrogated by the New. It would be an objection, if the abrogated parts of the Old Testament had been originally revealed as a permanent rule of faith and duty. But they disclaim this high prerogative ; they themselves profess to be only a temporary rule, a local rule, that was designed to be superseded by a more perfect and permanent economy. The ceremonial and civil code of the Jewish nation was of such a kind that it could be abrogated, without contravening any one of the great principles of truth and rectitude of which the Bible, as an entire revelation, is the only infallible standard. It was made up, not of moral laws, but of positive institutions which partook not of a moral nature, nor had they any other binding force except that they were commanded. They carried within themselves the seeds of their own dissolution—seeds planted by the hand of God. They were instituted for a particular nation, for a limited time, and for a

specified purpose ; and the prediction that they should cease was uttered by God's own voice.

It is one of the proofs of their divine origin, and of their harmony with the other parts of Divine Revelation, that when that time had expired, and that purpose was attained, and that nation passed from under the sceptre of their theocracy, all that was peculiar in the Jewish dispensation was merged in the common Christianity. It is one thing for Christianity to supersede Judaism, another for Judaism to contradict Christianity ; one thing for the New Testament to be inconsistent with the Old, and another for the Old, through a long succession of ages, to prepare the way for the New. And this is precisely the relation which the two Testaments sustain to one another. In all its arrangements the Old is ever looking towards the New economy, and these arrangements are completed only by that which is to come. The Old is preliminary to the New, and the New the accomplishment of the Old. And is not this evidence of harmony, rather than the want of it ?

Still further : There are several features of the Old Testament which are carried into the New, and which show that they constitute but different parts of one system. The moral code of the Old Testament is the moral code of Christianity ; the truth of the Old Testament is the truth of the New. The infidel may be challenged to specify a single moral law, or one principle of truth contained in the writings of Moses and the prophets, which is not recog-

nized and honored by having a place in the teachings of Christ and the apostles.

Every attentive reader of the Bible cannot but have remarked, that to a very great extent, the New Testament does but little more than inculcate with greater explicitness, and amplify the instructions of Moses and the prophets. Nor are they these great moral features of the Old Testament simply, that appear in all their prominence and brightness in the New ; but not a few of the features even of its ceremonial institutions, stand out in their true import only in the Christian revelation. The thought is too familiar to almost every mind to need dwelling upon, that the most emphatic institutions of that economy relate to the distinguished Personage who is the grand subject of the Christian revelation, and centre in his person and work. Not only were the sacrifices and oblations prefigurative of the great oblation offered on Calvary, and not only did they derive all their importance from this their typical import ; but all the prophecies of the Old Testament are of the same character, and have the person and work of Christ for their common object. They form a *system* of prophecies with this one object in view. The harmony and unity of their design are not only peculiar, and different from all the pretended predictions of pagan oracles, but are in this respect strongly marked, and truly wonderful. “It shall bruise thy head, thou shalt bruise his heel :” here this wonderful system of predictions began. It ran on in one ridge of time, and in one line of the generations of

Adam, till it reached the Jewish nation ; and never swerved from its object, nor ran out of the line of that people, until the last of the seers uttered his memorable predictions, about four hundred years before the coming of Christ ; and John, his more proximate harbinger, exclaimed, “ Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world ! ” It began with Christ ; and with Christ it terminated. Every intermediate prophecy, for almost four thousand years, whether made to Noah, or to Abraham ; to Isaiah, or Malachi ; whether it concerned the antediluvian world, or the nations of Canaan ; or the Jews, or the Egyptians, or Nineveh, or Babylon, or Persia, Greece or Rome ; concentrated in the gradual and prospective developement of the Divine purpose in regard to one great event and object—the coming of Jesus in the flesh, and the establishment of his kingdom in the earth. Whatever other ends may have been incidentally subserved by this series of prophecies, this is the great end for which the Scriptures of the New Testament inform us this long-continued intercourse between Heaven and earth was maintained.

Now we say that in all these respects, and if in all these, in all others, there is wonderful harmony between the Old and New Testaments. The Old predicts the New, and the New appeals to the Old. Here is a system of instructions, of sacrifices, of predictions, all of prodigious extent, commencing with the fall of man and reaching to the death of Christ, all telling the same story, fraught with the same

thoughts, disclosing the same marvellous purpose—a system made up of thousands of parts, and pervading forty centuries; yet everything about it is of a piece, and astonishingly great as it is, all perfectly harmonious. Whence is it? Whence was it? Who was it that bound these two dispensations together, and made them one system? Who bound the prediction in Eden concerning “The Seed of the woman,” with Malachi’s prediction of “The Desire of all nations?” Who associated the blood of Abel’s sacrifice with the great oblation that “speaketh better things than the blood of Abel?” Who made the faith of Abraham under the Old dispensation, the example and pattern of later saints under the New? Who made these two dispensations thus speak the same thing? Who thus impregnated the Old with the New, and made the New the expansion and developement of the Old? Is it not strange blindness, that can overlook the mind and hand of God in this accordancy? Impostors might here and there have lighted on a single prefiguration, an isolated service, a lone and solitary prediction; but never on such a long-continued, complete, and harmonious system—for the obvious reasons, that no impostor would have thought of it, and that if he had thought of it, the coincidences are beyond his power.

We look upon this wonderful system, now that it is revealed to us, as one of the simplest things in the world; just as we do upon the laws of nature, to which no being could give birth but the God of nature. The more the one part is studied, and

understood, the more light does it throw upon the other. If one is false, both are false ; and both are true, if one is true. They lap on to one another, and show the style of the wise Master Builder. There is no collision between them. They are "the two witnesses of heaven;" and instead of "emitting such cross lights as are fitted to bewilder the eye of the observer, they are the two candlesticks which man hath not planted, but which stand before the God of the whole earth." Nothing is more preposterous than to suppose that this harmony, involving as it does so many things, extending as it does over so many ages, embracing as it does such a vast variety of means all tending to the same end and so many causes all producing the same result, is the creature of human wisdom. Pre-concert in such an arrangement was impossible. Nor is it any accidental, or fabulous coincidence. The hand of God is in it : there is no accounting for it, unless "holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Such is the reality and nature of the agreement or concord of the Scriptures with themselves. In all their accession of parts, and in all the progress of their augmented revelations, they may have been perpetually acquiring new excellencies ; but they never depart from their uniform character. They disclose new truths, but there is no change of truths once disclosed ; new views, but they are not altered views. They consist of more than threescore distinct treatises, composed by more than thirty different writers, most of whom were unknown to each

other, separated by their places of residence, living in different periods and ages of the world, and were all scattered through a period of not less than sixteen hundred years. They were men greatly differing in natural endowments; in age, education, and learning; in their passions and prejudices, and in the stations they held in society. Some of them were rich, and some of them were poor; some of them were legislators and kings, and some of them were shepherds, fishermen, and taxgatherers. They wrote also upon the most interesting of all subjects, the great subject of religion and morals: the subject on which the human mind is acutely sensitive—the subject, in relation to which the stormy passions of men hold them in perpetual agitation, and their ungoverned fancy keeps them in wide and wild extremes—the subject on which human tradition, and human laws, and the maxims and habits of men, and the state of society, and caste and classification, are almost endlessly diversified; and on which, for centuries, nothing was written save what is written in the Bible; and for other centuries, though much was written, little was accessible to the mass of mankind, or that had the confidence of those to whom it was accessible.

The inviolable uniformity, therefore, pervading the Scriptures, is a fact of no doubtful authority in demonstrating their divine origin. No one impostor could have written thus; and no body of impostors, scattered through so many centuries, could have thus agreed with one another. Had such been the

origin of these books, they would have varied with the wisdom, or the folly, or the caprice of their authors; they would have changed with every passing age and every revolution of laws and manners, and received their peculiar coloring from the class of society from which their respective authors were taken. So that it is utterly impossible they could have been written without the superintendence of a Divine power.

Such is the argument for the divine origin of the Scriptures from their perfect harmony and agreement.

There is but one objection to it which we feel called upon to answer. The infidel demands, "If the Bible is thus harmonious, whence is it that there is so much discordancy among those who profess to make it the only standard of their faith and practice? If the Bible is one, if there is an honest faith in it, whence this discrepancy?" We acknowledge the force of the objection, so far as it regards *men*; but we do not perceive its stringency as it regards the Bible. We say, let God be true, though every man be a liar. As to the discordances among men, we cannot open our mouth. It is as true in moral, as in mathematical science, "that two things which are equal to another and the same thing, are themselves equal." Human systems which agree with the Bible, agree with each other. The Bible is right, but men are wrong; they are sincerely wrong, because they are sincere in their differences. In requiring men to adopt the Bible as their standard, its Author requires them not to disagree among

themselves. Men alone are chargeable with the sin of putting this objection into the mouth of infidelity, and of bringing this reproach upon the word of God.

It is a mournful, but undeniable truth, that the church of God has apostatized from her primeval unity. Time was when "the multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul." But these days have passed away; and infidelity has for ages triumphed in a divided church. There is great sin in these discordancies; nor is it the less because they may, peradventure, have become venerable for their age; nor because the guilt of them has been so long in contracting, and they have become so closely inwoven, and so deeply imbedded in the habits of human thought. We may not depart from the great and obvious principle, that what the Bible teaches, no man, and no set of men, has a right to disbelieve; nor can we resist the irrefragable conclusion, that where this beautifully harmonious system of truth is received, men themselves will be as harmonious as the Bible.

But while we give utterance to thoughts like these, we would not have infidels unmindful of the fact, that there is much more extended, substantial agreement in all true Christians than their objection implies. There is such a thing as the "communion of saints," and essential harmony, with unessential differences. Already are there significant movements in the church of God pointing towards greater harmony of views and affection. It will be indeed a new era, when such a day is fully ushered in—a dawning, such as has not brightened our spiritual

horizon since the early dawn of the Sun of righteousness, when he rose with "healing in his beams." It will be a waxing, and not a waning light. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." His church will put on her garments of strength and salvation; her adornment will be the simplicity of truth and the beauty of holiness; and she will look forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as a bannered army. It will be eminently the Lord's work, and marvellous in the eyes of them who behold it. It will require so much free and unembarrassed interchange of thought; so much candor and fairness; so much that is amiable and conciliating; so much humility and prayer; such a strong and practical acknowledgment of God's word as the only infallible standard; such oblivion of men, and such a remembrance of the great God; that his own condescending goodness and mercy will be most visibly honored in effecting it. This was the prophet's hope when he said, "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion." This was the Saviour's prayer, in view of the wants and woes of a ruined world and a scoffing age: "I pray that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me!"

CHAPTER VII.

ADAPTATION OF THE SCRIPTURES TO THE CHARACTER AND WANTS OF MAN.

Not a little has been written on the subject of Natural Theology, to prove the being of God from the adaptation of external nature to the intellectual and moral constitution of man. In a short digression from his main object, in one of the Bridgewater Treatises upon this topic, the Reverend Dr. Chalmers makes the following observations. "If in the system of external nature, we can recognize the evidence of God being its Author in the adaptation, wherewith it teems, to the moral and intellectual constitution of man, there is room and opportunity for this very evidence in the book of an external revelation. What appears in the construction of a world might be made to appear as manifestly in the construction of a volume, whose objective truth may present as obvious and skilful an accommodation to our mental economy as do the objective things of a created universe. And it is not less favorable for an indication of its divine original, that whereas nature, as being the original system, abounds with those fitnesses which harmonize with the mental constitution in a state of health; Christianity, as being a

restorative system, abounds in fitnesses to the same constitution in a state of disease. Certain it is that the same wisdom, and goodness, and even power of a moral architect, may be as strikingly evinced in the reparation, as in the primeval establishment of a moral nature."

It is to this class of credentials with which the Bible comes to us, that I propose to devote the present chapter. Man, in his primeval integrity, was a world of wonders. Endowed with exalted intellectual faculties, from the first moment of his existence he was obedient to the law of his being, and his Creator; his moral excellence was unblotted, and his character sinless. As a consequence of this, he was happy. Above, without, within, there was nothing to interrupt his fellowship with his Maker, nothing to poison the fountains of his joy. To us this picture seems almost like fable, because in all the subsequent history of our race, there is not another such example of innocence and loveliness; not one bright and refreshing spot on which the eye can rest. In his fallen state, he is a complication of wonders; a complication of intellectual and moral ailments, that are at war with one another and with God. Originally the elements of his being all vitally united, and all, with their separate functions, were in due subordination and subserviency. Melancholy as the fact is, sin has disturbed and confounded this harmony; it has to such an extent deranged man's intellectual and moral system, that he has lost sight of the great end of his existence; and remaining as he

is, is unhappy, lives to no good purpose, and dies in despair.

A system of philosophy, or religion, that can successfully address itself to his entire being in all its states of moral degradation and reform, in all their varieties, in all the unnumbered individuals of the race, in every age and clime, must be a nicely adjusted system. Its parts must be wonderfully arranged and put together so as to meet one another, and so that its many movements and influences may all tend to one and the most desirable result. We affirm, that just such a system is revealed in the Bible ; and we proceed to trace this adaptation.

1. We look at man, in the first place, as an *individual existence*. One of his noblest powers is his *intelligence*. He is the creature of thought ; and this thinking existence within him must have a religion that satisfies it. If the understanding does not go along with it, or if it keep his mind in the bandages of infancy and impose manacles upon thought, it is no religion for a creature of intelligence. Or if it be a religion that makes heavy exactions upon his credulity, and does not enforce its claims by solid argument, it is no religion for a creature of intelligence. The Bible reveals no such dubious theories ; but on the other hand, just the truths in which the human mind, in all the stages of its progress and advancement, feels the deepest interest ; and which, from their simplicity, their greatness and their certainty, are not only fitted to relieve from intellectual depression and disquietude,

but impart intense delight to every honest inquiry after truth. Here are those great objects of knowledge, those truths, which the mind so eagerly seeks after, and which men most need to know.

It is not easy for us who have the Bible in our hands, to have any conception of the doubt, the absolute scepticism, and the consequent solicitude and distress on almost every subject of religious and moral inquiry, which would prevail but for the clear and authoritative decisions of this one Book. Everything would be thrown into the region of conjecture ; the human mind would be in a state of fermentation, and everywhere tossed upon the ocean of its own unsettled thoughts. If the inquiry were put to the most intelligent and established Christian in the world, What would be his faith without the Bible ? he would feel constrained to reply, " I do not know what it would be." It would be like dark chaos, or the ocean in a storm, where neither faith nor hope would have any anchorage ground to rest upon. This truthful record meets the wants of man as the creature of intelligence. It is the religion of light, of truth and certainty. It satisfies the mind when nothing else satisfies. No matter how depressed, or degraded the intelligence, the Bible elevates it ; no matter how elevated it is, the Bible is its guide and counsellor ; no matter how faint and weary, here it is led to the head and fountain of living waters.

Man, too, is a *moral* being : he possesses a sense of moral obligation, and while he approves what is right, he condemns what is wrong in moral conduct.

Conscience has not a little to do with his religion, although in defiance of himself she is a severe arbiter. Men who do not obey her dictates, know that they ought to obey them. She may not govern them, but she claims the right of governing them; and though her supremacy may be disputed, resisted, and dethroned, yet she "ever holds the legitimate authority." She approves of rectitude; but, unhappily, she sees very little to approve; and the consequence is, she feels the outrage and the wrong. In default of the rectitude she demands, she has nothing left her but to utter her remonstrances, and inflict those terrible apprehensions, those fearful forebodings of the coming wrath, which agitate and torment the soul. Sometimes she exerts this, her only remaining prerogative, with amazing power; and so lashes the offender with her scorpion sting, that he feels within him the incipient gnawings of the worm that never dies. A religion that is adapted to man, must meet these demands of conscience. They cannot be resisted, nor set aside, nor connived at: it is not in man's nature thus to trifle with her claims.

If we look to the history of the past, or if we look over the face of the world at the present hour, we see that the various religions of human devising fail to suggest the method by which these demands shall be obviated. Thousands and millions have tried them; but, with one single exception, there is no religion that has ever been able to extract the fangs of this deadly serpent. No experiment has

ever been tried more extensively, or more fully, or more fairly. Costly offerings have been laid on the shrine of idol gods, voluntary sufferings have been inflicted without number upon the defaulter, and living men have been immolated upon the altars of Moloch. Yet none of these religions ever gave, nor can they give the conscience peace.

Yet may this deadly wound be healed. "There is balm in Gilead; there is a physician there." As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of Man been lifted up. Altogether remote from the ordinary apprehensions of mankind, and the most extraordinary of the Divine proceedings with regard to man, the cross of Christ effectually meets these demands, and imparts "peace which passeth all understanding." This is what the religion of the Bible professes to accomplish; and there is "a great cloud of witnesses" that bear testimony to the redemption of this wondrous pledge. These are *matters of fact*, and no reasoning in the world can disprove them. This one religion there is, which in theory and practice, by observation and experience, proves itself a fitting and full relief for these terrible apprehensions. It is a remarkable fact in the history of our race, that no man ever believed in the Christian Atonement without a pacified conscience. The remedy is adapted to the disease. Duly appreciated, that great sacrifice for sin acts as a charm upon the conscience, and assuages its agonies. It brings relief. The aching head reposes upon it. It stanches the wounds of the lacerated and bleeding spirit, and

relieves from apprehensions which make existence a burden, and immortality a curse.

Men also have something more than intellect and conscience, to which the Bible is adapted. Their *moral character* is polluted and vile ; it is defiled and loathsome ; far from God and the rectitude which he approves. It is unfruitful in righteousness, and fruitful only in sin—like a land bearing thorns and briers, whose end is to be burned. We need no revelation from Heaven to teach this affecting and melancholy lesson : it is not so much a lesson to be taught and learned, as a disgraceful and woeful picture to be surveyed, and one over which we might well shed a flood of tears. Yet is there no relief from the havoc sin has made, and no deliverance from the power of sin, except from the Bible. The fact is one which, if it had not been so often repeated, might well strike us with surprise, that however the mind of man may be improved by culture, refined by science, restrained by discipline, controlled by law, or elevated by those moralizing influences which false religions and human agency may supply, there is not an age, nor territory throughout this wide world, where these influences alone have made it better and holier. There is not an instance of exemption from this sweeping remark. Yet is this moral transformation the great want, the crying exigency of man. Other interests and claims are worthless and insignificant compared with this. If he must live and die the sinning, sinful, defiled and loathsome being that he is, better for him

never to have had a being. The Bible is adapted to this pressing exigency. It reveals truths which are powerful to conviction and conversion ; it possesses influences which quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins ; it sends forth a spirit which breathes upon the dry bones, and flesh and sinews come upon them, and life enters into them, and they stand up upon their feet. What polluted man wants is to be washed from his uncleanness ; and here is the fountain where he may wash and be clean : what he wants is to be delivered from sin ; and here is the deliverer. He would have his mind no longer like the dry, barren, unyielding rock where no heavenly grace flourishes ; but like the garden of God, where every grace strikes its roots deep, and unfolds its blossoms, and diffuses its fragrance, and bears its fruit. And here is the influence that changes the heart of stone, and transforms its cold and rocky soil into a land of fertility and gladness.

There is no need of illustrating the fact, that man too is *the child of sorrow*. A rational being must have consolation in trials. All the world over, the refuge of men in seasons of affliction is their *religion* : they may have other refuges, but their religion is their last resort. Many have been the professors of wisdom, and many the wise men that have lived where the Bible is not known, but there were no comforters. Philosophy tells us, when sickness invades our pillow, when pain agonizes, when friends die, when property is gone, and when, instead of influence and honor, we suffer only dis-

honor and contempt, that there is no help for it, that these are evils all men must bear, and that it becomes us to bear them like men ! False religions, almost without exception, endeavor to alleviate one trial only by adding another ; and for the obvious reason that they have no consolation to give : they are not the religion man needs.

The Bible does not indeed profess to reveal a religion that exempts from adversity ; it rather lays its account with afflictions : it tells men that they must expect to suffer. Nor is there anything, in any of its truths, that is designed to blunt the acuteness of natural feeling. Yet has it consolations for the hour of trial, and such as bear the test of the hottest furnace. Of the Author of our trials, it declares, that he “doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men ;” that “as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” It tells of a “Great High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities ;” who “knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust ;” and who “stayeth his rough wind, in the day of his east wind.” It teaches the children of sorrow to say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble,” while their own response to its teachings is, “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation !” And while it teaches men these things, it tells them too, that however severe and heavy their trials may be, they are “but for a season,” for “a little moment,” and

shall “work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” It tells them of the “trial of faith,” that is “much more precious than that of gold tried in the fire ;” that it redounds to “praise, honor, and glory ;” so that in the retrospect of their severest trials, they can say, “Happy is the man that God correcteth !” As with the serenity of an angel’s countenance, it tells them, that although they have fiery trials to pass through, yet have they an “inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” That terrible state of mind, *suspense* under apprehended and foreboding evils, finds its antidote only in the Bible. Where, in all the records of earth, is there a sentence like this : “Casting all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you ;” or like this : “Be careful for nothing ; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” O, trials are freed from their bitterness, darkness of its horrors, and fear of its apprehensions, by the whispers of this gentle voice !

The influence which a sensitive creature like man requires, is that also which shall give *his emotions* a right and happy direction. The Academic philosophers erred with the Stoics ; the one in trying to eradicate the emotions and affections of men, the other in making human happiness consist in unrestrained indulgence. If his Creator be wise and good, his government over him is such, as to give that direc-

tion to his ardent affections that shall be most accordant with his intellectual, moral, and immortal existence. His affections wisely directed and indulged, constitute the loveliness, the glory of his nature. More than anything else, they constitute the man himself, and make him what he is. If misdirected, they make him a degraded, vicious, miserable being; if they are directed wisely, they ennoble, purify, and make him happy. That keenly sensitive nature, which renders him capable of love and hatred, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, must be controlled: it must have something to love; something which may be loved safely and without remorse; something which may be loved without injury to its ever growing desires; something which is worthy of its love; something which responds to the sincerity and fervor of its affections, and which may be pursued with all the ardor and intensity which are inseparable from a sensitive existence.

The Bible, and the Bible only, meets these inward longings of the heart, be they ever so intense and exalted. Every human affection finds its place in the religion it reveals. The love of self finds its proper place there; and so does the love of kindred, and the love of country, and the love of the world, and the love of God and man, yea, the love of everything that is in any measure worthy of love. It does not annihilate one of these affections; it does not forbid them; nor does it degrade them, as false religions do: nor does it disappoint them, as they are

always disappointed when they receive a wrong direction and impulse.

Nor in giving them a right direction, does it ever unsettle, unhinge, or derange them. While it gives them ardor and zeal, it also gives them strength and firmness; and while its impulses are sometimes so intensely vivid and strong, that, but for their pure and heavenly nature, they would well nigh drive the soul to those excesses of emotion which border on madness; they are the very impulses which, when indulged in their purity, impart to it loveliness and meekness, tenderness and humility, and not unfrequently an almost unearthly splendor, as they do well nigh unearthly joys. Religious zeal may sometimes degenerate into blind enthusiasm; but when it does so, it is no longer Christian. Other impulses than those which the essential charity of the Gospel inspires, render its movements wild and incoherent; while the true spirit of the Bible is the spirit of love, of meekness, and of a sound mind. Men may be excited in their contemplation of its truth; they may be transported and transformed; while in their most enrapturing contemplations they never lose the due equilibrium of thought. The eye of reason is still unclouded and clear; their conceptions are strong and brilliant; nor is there anything they acknowledge more absolutely than the authority of truth. Paul was never more rational than when he was "caught up into the third heaven," and "whether in the body he could not tell, or whether out of the body he could not tell." It is a remarkable fact,

that every other class of affections of which the heart is susceptible, may be indulged too far and too eagerly; and when pursued beyond a given point, they sound the note of alarm, and tell us that reason already begins to totter on her throne; while the affections, and emotions, and sacred passions which are excited and gratified by the truths of the Bible, to whatever degree they are stimulated, and to whatever extent they are indulged, do but give strength and consistency to character, and promote holy enjoyment. The religion it reveals is just fitted for man's sensitive and ardent nature. It imparts to him his true dignity; brings him into new alliances with his Maker; enstamps upon him his image; makes him his friend, adopts him as his son, and in its progressive power makes him like unto the angels.

It is with weakness and fear, and much trembling, that every man contemplates the truth that *he must die*. We carry forth, and commit to the grave, the sleeping dust of those we love; and the inquiry forces itself upon us, Will the much and long-cherished flower shoot upward again, and bloom to immortality? From the bed of languishing, we ourselves look down into the dark and hollow sepulchre, and inquire, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Reason, nature, conscience, analogy, do indeed suggest the thought—the strong probability of an hereafter; but they warrant no conviction that satisfies, no certain conclusions where the mind pants for certainty. With only such lights as these, man is wrapped in obscurity; his very existence is

involved in impenetrable darkness and mystery; he sees no object of his being, no end to be attained by it, but to live a little while amid the alternate joys and sorrows of this low world, and perpetuate his dying race through the same vicissitudes of toil, and care, and sorrow, through which he himself has trodden—sometimes his rapid, and sometimes his more tardy way, to the gloomy mansions of the grave. The thought of annihilation is a dreadful thought; yet it sometimes stares him in the face, presses on him on all sides, hangs about him like a leaden curtain; and as one long exposed on the verge of a precipice, leaps into the abyss to escape the terrors of suspense, so he often longs to seek a refuge in annihilation, from the weight of depression and gloom which it inspires. Here the Bible is a light shining in a dark place; it brings life and immortality to light: to every virtuous mind it announces the glad tidings of a glorious hereafter, and through the narrow and dark inlet of the grave, points him to an unseen world—a world of which he himself is to form a part, where he is to be allied to cherubim and seraphim, and elevated to a celestial throne. The thought of immortality is a great and stupendous thought. Even viewed at a distance, and as a doubtful fact, it must overwhelm with its magnitude and grandeur. When contemplated as certain, the mind is filled with wonder at it; and the more it contemplates it, the more does the contemplation add perpetual interest to the wonder. To this greatest of all the wants of man, this Book is

adapted, giving the coming world a reality, an importance, a nearness, that gratify his strong and restless desires for immortality which it is impossible to eradicate, and which are gratified only here.

Such is the adaptation of the Bible to man as an individual. While contemplating this part of our subject, I have more than once endeavored to rouse my imagination to the effort of picturing all the possible conditions of men, with the view of ascertaining if this remarkable Book has not "a word in season" to every individual of the human race, in every condition, in every state of mind, and in every associated community. Nor is it in my power to think of any man, in any condition or state of mind, or any society, whether high or low, learned or ignorant, in prosperity or adversity, in sickness or health, in freedom or in bondage, at home or abroad, in the church or out of it, happy or miserable, to whom the Scriptures do not address the most fitting counsels, and for whom they have not some admonition, or consolation, peculiar to the Sacred Writings, and furnished by no other book. Its shades of thought, in this respect, are almost endless. It were a delightful employment to mark and specify this wonderful variety of moral pencilling, so marvellously fitted to the almost endlessly diversified character and condition of men. Were a religious teacher, familiar with the Bible and deeply imbued with its spirit, intimately acquainted with the character and state of mind of his entire charge, he would be at no loss to select the best adapted in-

struction for every one of them, in the language and words of the sacred volume itself. Even though he speak at random, he would not fail to utter truths applicable to the unobserved and unknown condition of those who hear him ; and in drawing his bow at a venture, his arrow would find its mark, even through "the joints of the harness."

2. From this view of the adaptation of the Bible to man as an individual, let us, in the second place, advert to the consideration, that it is equally adapted to *his social relations*. Man is a social being : he cannot live for himself ; nor can he live alone. The principles of his social nature must be cared for. There are his relations to civil government ; there are his domestic relations ; there are his relations to his fellow men in the ordinary transactions of human life, which need to be watched over, and controlled, and so influenced, as neither to pervert the principles of benevolent association, nor lose sight of its object. These various relations are nowhere consulted with the same benevolent spirit and practical wisdom with which they are consulted in the Scriptures : so far from it, that in communities where the Bible is not known, every one of them presents little else than frightful spectacles of crime and misery.

In a most remarkable manner does the history of the world show that the Bible is the great charter of *human freedom*. If the correlative rights and obligations of rulers and subjects were under the effective control of the Bible, those who bear authority and those who are subjected to it, would be helpers of one

another's joy ; the yoke of the oppressor would melt away ; kings would be foster fathers, and queens foster mothers, to a tranquil and regenerated world. Among the most important state papers of modern times, are the Preamble and the Articles of Confederation issued by Francis of Germany, Frederic William of Prussia, and Alexander of Russia, signed and published at Paris in the year 1815, and solemnly recognizing, before Europe and the world, the religion of Jesus Christ as the only true basis of all political relations, and the only directory for the nations of the earth. Whatever may have been the motives of these distinguished kings and emperors in issuing it, it is a noble testimony to the power of Christian principles upon states and governments. Considering the sources from which it came, a stronger and more emphatic tribute to the principles of Christianity as the only true principles of government, and the only foundation of national prosperity, cannot be expected, or demanded. It is an interesting fact, that these three great monarchs, ruling over more than seventy millions of people, then amid the clashing and din of war, should assemble in secret conclave, and pay such a tribute to the Bible.

Nowhere, save in the Scriptures, is there a description of *the domestic virtues* that commends itself to a refined and delicate mind ; and nowhere else is there to be found such prescriptions for the domestic evils which infest and degrade all unchristian and anti-christian lands. Nowhere is the domestic character and constitution of man so magnified, as in

lands where the influence of the Bible is submitted to. Nowhere else are those mutual dependencies, and those bonds of endearing attachment on which the well-being of society depends, protected by such solemn sanctions. Nowhere else are the spirit and deportment, from which all social enjoyment and virtue and usefulness flow, so constantly inculcated and so beautifully exemplified. Nowhere else are "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely," so much thought of and enjoined.

The Old Testament Scriptures took up the social state where they found it ; nor was it to be perfected in a moment. If some of the judicial laws of the Jews, themselves but just escaped from the degradation of paganism, were behind the purer code of Christianity, it is not less certain that they were also far in advance of the contemporaneous pagan nations. The judicial and political economy of the Jews was for them alone ; it suffered many things "for the hardness of their hearts," which form no part of a perfect moral code ; and it is to God's finished revelation alone that we must look for those perfect principles which enter into and form the perfection of the social state.

If from these sanctions of the domestic relations we go abroad into the world, and inspect the relations which man sustains to his fellow men in the ordinary affairs of human life, we find these relations nowhere protected as in the Bible. Let but the injunctions of the Bible regulate the intercourse and usages of society, and not a few of those subtle and

perplexing questions of casuistry which now agitate every part of the business community, would be cut short by an arbiter, which even those who think themselves honest and honorable men would deem an overstrained and an over-sensitive exactness.

There is a peculiarity in the Bible in regard to its influence on the social relations. Men in their social capacity are not only exposed to everything that is wicked, but to everything that is *ultra and extravagant*. Even the minds of the better sort of men need something which human wisdom fails to give them; else are their most honest and best intended efforts disorganizing, and disastrous to the social state. Human society without the Bible, is like a ship on the ocean without ballast; she can scarcely live in smooth water: the first storm ingulfs her in the waves. The thought is not always present to our minds, that the world is under great obligations to the Bible, if for nothing but *its conservative principles and influence*. It is uniformly healthful in its influence, and alike opposed to all the indiscretions of a misdirected zeal on the one hand, and a rabid radicalism on the other. Ultra men and ultra measures, be the objects they aim at ever so good, always find the Bible against them. "Wisdom is justified of her children;" and time and experience show, that those who would be better than the Bible are always wrong. There is wonderful wisdom in the Bible, not only in what it teaches, but in what it does *not* teach. There are agitating and exciting questions

which it leaves just where they ought to be left : its silence on many subjects speaks volumes. And this is the more remarkable, when we consider the great amount of its instructions. An impostor, who had written so much, would have written more. The Bible lets many things alone which no impostor would have had discretion enough to let alone. It does not commit itself, where an impostor would have been imperative. While its great principles are applicable to every evil in the organization of human society, and while its invariable tendency is to eradicate these evils, it is careful how it creates a needless ferment, and breaks up the foundations of the community which it would preserve and bless. So far as its decisions go, they are safe. It holds an even balance between the extremes of a guilty and pusillanimous indifferentism, and a blind, overheated exclusiveness. Even with this immutable standard in their hands, honest men may err ; but it is a delightful thought, and a safe retreat from their unjust awards, that the decisions of the Bible are paramount to the verdict of fallible men. I have never been more impressed with this characteristic of the Scriptures, than from the incidental remarks of some modern infidels, in their public speeches, called forth by some of the exciting topics of the age in which we live. More than once have I known *them* appeal to the Bible, as the acknowledged standard of common sense and common discretion. And when they do so, it is perfectly obvious that they themselves feel that they have solid rock to stand

upon. There is a sort of intuitive impression on the minds of all men, whether they believe the Scriptures or not, that it is in vain for them to improve upon the arrangements of its unequalled wisdom.

What is man in his social relations without the Bible? Pride boasts of him, but he is a worm. Science boasts of him, but he is like the brutes that perish. Pleasure, wealth, honor, friends boast of him; but they have not even a gossamer veil to cover his shame. Philanthropy boasts of him; but it is a wild, eccentric, meteor-like philanthropy, and not like "the clear shining of the sun after rain." What the Scriptures reveal, is wondrously adapted to the social character and condition of man; there is nothing wanting in them, and nothing superfluous. Take away any of its instructions in this department, and it would be found that there is something in the social relations to which it has no counterpart; add to them, and the counterpart is wanting in the social relations; alter them, and these relations themselves will need to be altered.

3. This thought, as well as those submitted in the preceding paragraphs, receives additional force from the consideration, that this *adaptation is as large and extensive, as it is minute and particular*. The views of the Bible are comprehensive; its aspects are wide; the bearing of the entire range of its revelations is upon beings and interests that are widely spread over all the nations of the earth, however related, or classified, and however multiplied and involved their dependencies. The adapta-

tion of which we speak extends to the mass, as well as to the individual; to the whole, as well as a part; to "all men, everywhere." In this respect, Christianity differs essentially from all other religions. The stamp of locality is to be found on them all. They necessarily accommodate themselves to times, and places, and men; and therefore they are mutable. But the religion of Christ is for the world. Man is the same over the whole earth; but his habits in Lapland are different from his habits in the West Indies. Yet the Bible is adapted to him wherever he is. Different portions of the world have strong peculiarities, arising from moral, as well as natural causes; they are influenced by their philosophy, by their laws, by arts and sciences, and not a little by the fine arts. But Christianity bears one universal and uniform character and adaptation to all. Though itself immutable, and though never abandoning and never relaxing any one of its principles, it is equally accommodated to every class of human society, every parallel of latitude, and every son and daughter of Adam.

It has not, indeed, always maintained its purity: in Christianizing the heathen, it has itself been partially heathenized; in purifying others, it has itself imbibed taints of impurity. "Jewish observances, Grecian, Roman, Celtic, and Gothic superstitions are found in various parts of the nominally Christian church, according to the stock from which her population have sprung." But these impurities are not her own; they are the additions of men; made,

indeed, under the pretence of heightening her beauties, while they add defects and blemishes to her original and heavenly form. In her native lineaments she is equally fitted to be the resident of every clime, under every form of government, as well as amidst all those previous habits of thinking and acting which would at first view seem to be insuperably hostile to her influence.

Judaism, with its burdensome and expensive ritual, its gorgeous priesthood, and its now abolished ceremonies, never was intended, because it was never fitted to be, and never could be, the universal religion, any more than the temple at Jerusalem could be the temple of the world. All that is moral in the Old Testament, in distinction from its positive and ceremonial institutions, as we have before remarked, is as truly Christian as it is Jewish, and is transferred and perpetuated in the Christian system; while whatever is exclusively Jewish, is necessarily local and temporary.

It is equally obvious, that Mahometanism has no intrinsic adaptation to become the universal religion. It has indeed long subsisted, and is at this day the established religion of no small portion of the world. But though it admits the divine mission of Moses and Jesus, and recognizes many of the fundamental articles of the Jewish and Christian faith, it is mixed up with so many childish traditions and fables, and with the toleration of so many idolatrous rites, and with such an indulgence of licentiousness, and depends, moreover, so exclusively upon the power of

the sword ; that nothing can be more revolting to reason and conscience.

Christianity on the other hand, while it commends itself to reason and conscience, without which no religion can ever become universal, is in every view fitted to become the religion of the human race. The elements which give it this superiority are, its unblemished rectitude—the fact that it is a religion of principle—the simplicity of its essential truths, and their entire independence of all systems of human philosophy—the all-sufficiency and freeness of its salvation, held forth and pressed on the acceptance of every man—the plainness, yet the dignity and decency of its outward dress and observances—the economy of its expenditure—the liberality of its external organization—its divine impartiality, and its indwelling and all-conquering Spirit. These are fitted to carry it everywhere : to the polished and to the degraded states of human society, to every order of the human intellect, to every form of government, and every conceivable condition of man's history and being. It is the same thing everywhere—everywhere it carries the same light, the same obligations, the same convictions, the same holiness, the same mercy, the same hopes, the same consolations. Wherever its blessings are enjoyed, they are equally needed, equally precious ; wherever it comes, they are equally near. I say they are equally *near*. Men need not go for them to the Pope of Rome ; nor traverse plains and mountains to throw themselves under the car

of Juggernaut, or bathe in the Ganges ; nor need they make pilgrimages to Mecca, to Jerusalem, or Gerizim. The pilgrim on the rock finds them there ; the savage in the desert finds them there ; the mariner on the ocean finds them there ; and the humble worshipper, in his log-cabin, finds them more near and more precious than the less humble worshipper in the towering and gorgeous cathedral. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart."

4. To give still greater weight to these thoughts, we remark, that this revelation is equally adapted *to all periods of time and all ages of the world*. It is fitted to be the *perpetual religion*, and to cover the whole series of ages, till this world shall pass away. No matter how advanced in science, in morals, in government, the world may be, it cannot have a better religion than this. When the Saviour stood before that magnificent edifice, the temple of Jerusalem, he said to his disciples, "Verily, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but *my words shall not pass away*." Wonderful declaration ! and not at all wonderful that there were those who disbelieved it. When, with merely eleven men, he sat down at the Passover, he instituted a Supper, of which he said, "As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death *till he come*." We have lived to see these predictions fulfilled, so far as the progress of time has allowed us to be witnesses ; and now, after

the expiration of eighteen centuries, to learn that the system of truth and grace of which he was the Founder, is but in the freshness of its youth. The circumstances under which it was introduced, were in the highest degree inauspicious to its continuance a single century. Its Founder was slain: save two, all its first disciples came to a violent death: it was persecuted by the wrath of man and the rage of fiends. But it carried within it the indestructible elements of perpetuity. It survived all its enemies, and it survives still, because its great principles are imperishable and eternal, are inwoven with realities that never pass away, and have an adaptation to the wants and woes of every successive generation of men.

Human laws change, human governments put on different forms, systems of philosophy rise and fall with every passing century, and the various theories of social life expire almost with the same facility with which they come into existence, because they have no inherent adaptation to the unanticipated and perpetually varying condition of mankind. On the other hand, the religion of the Bible, because it anticipates the wants of man, because it meets these wants wherever he is, whatever his condition, and at whatever period in the progress of time he may dwell on the earth; instead of carrying with it the elements of its own destruction, gathers strength as it holds on its way, and in its onward progress combines the vigor of youth with the rich and ripening maturity of age. The secret of this perpetuity is

its inherent and wonderful adaptation to the human character in every successive period of time. It is built, not upon experience, but upon anticipation. This system of government and redemption needs no change, because the character of its subjects is a fixed and uniform character : the remedy is the same, because the disease never alters.

Such is the adaptation of the Bible to the character and wants of men. Review these thoughts one by one, review them in the aggregate, and say if they furnish no evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures. Contrast this Book with the different religious systems which are confessedly of human origin, and can you fail to see that these latter are radically defective in adaptation to the wants of men, and on this account fail of their object ? Men find no relief from them. After all the abstinence, pilgrimages, ablutions, penance, and blood they enjoin, there is not one among them all that satisfies the understanding, the conscience, the heart, the immortality, or that in any view furnishes a basis for hope. The restive heart finds nothing in them to tranquilize its unhallowed excitement ; nothing to feed upon save that which augments its misery, because it is the aliment of its wickedness. They open no medium of communication between creatures and the God who is invisible ; between the world that is seen, and the world that is not seen ; nor do they accomplish anything towards healing the breach between God and man, or bringing heaven any nearer to earth, or earth any nearer to heaven. There

is nothing in them by which the nature of man becomes purified, or elevated, or which discloses anything that possesses even the slightest pretension to a radical cure for the great moral malady that pervades our race. Go where you will throughout the pagan world, and it will be found that these are wants which the religions of paganism, in all their varieties, fail to supply. The chasm is wide and deep, and there is nothing to fill it. Instead of consulting the condition, and meeting the exigencies of man, they actually debase that condition, and augment those exigencies, and perpetuate them. Instead of being the friend of man, they are his enemy; and instead of lighting up his prospects, they overshadow them by the clouds of dark ignorance and wretched superstition. Men of thought in pagan lands, themselves saw, and said, that they were systems of delusion and lies, and acquiesced in them only because they could be imposed on the more ignorant and unthinking. Can any man of sober thought speak thus, or think thus of the Bible? No, never. He may try to do it, but the thing is impossible.

Whether the Book that thus minutely and extensively consults the character and condition of our fallen race, is human or Divine, we may leave to every ingenuous mind to decide. Does not this wondrous adaptation itself bear testimony for it, that it is from God? Is not the Bible so fitted to the wants of man, that He who made one must have actually fashioned both? Does it not speak for itself, as the matchless expedient which his wisdom

and love have devised for creatures who are apostates from his family? Not until some other system can be specified that thus meets the necessities of our race, may we relinquish our confidence in the Bible, or give up the argument for its divine origin derived from this adaptation. Whether it utter the voice of man or of God, of some foul impostor or the God of love, cannot long be a matter of doubt. A religion that so wisely and fully consults the varied and richest elements of man's nature, carries the evidence with it that it is from the Author of that nature. It will be difficult to reason a man out of his belief in divine revelation, or to laugh him out of it, who has clear conceptions of its fitness to his wants.

It were no easy matter for an impostor to devise a religion, which, while it suited with so much precision to the individual, should at the same time be equally adapted to the entire race; and while it should consult the peculiarities of one age of time, should not be less relevant to all successive ages. Men have never found themselves so wise. A parent who has but one child to instruct and govern, is justified in pursuing a very different course with that one, from the course he would pursue as the head of a numerous family. The monarch of a single province can more easily prescribe a code of laws for that single province, than arrange a system of government that is alike adapted to a thousand distinct and distant provinces. A system of instruction and government that is equally adapted to the whole family of man, and to every isolated individual of

that family, must not only comprise many things, but be very nicely adjusted, and maintain an invariable tendency to one and the same benevolent end. Every part of it must be wisely selected, and all the parts, taken together, must be wisely suited to one another. It must view every individual in connection with the whole, and the whole in its relations to every individual. The Bible is such a system; it consults all these relations—relations which no finite mind in the universe could have anticipated or discovered, much less a collection of minds, of varied character, and so separated by time and circumstance as to be precluded from all possibility of collusion. In all its great principles, and in all the filling up of these great outlines; in all its laws and organization; in all its worship and rites; in all its sanctions, motives and influences, here is a system of truth and grace every way adapted to man's condition and character. The material world does not present more, or more admirable instances of adaptation, or those which are more expressive of the wisdom of its Author, than are here presented in the immaterial and spiritual. It is not an attempt at the restoration of man; but to the full extent in which it is faithfully applied, it effects it. It is not an attempt at religion; it is a religion, and the only religion adapted to man. It is not an attack upon the enemy, or a mere prescription for the disease; it is a victory over him, and a sovereign cure. Just as light is adapted to the eye and sound to the ear; just as the solid earth is adapted to one class of animated

existencies, the sea to another, and the air to a third—just, in one word, as there is a suitableness in all the parts of nature, in themselves, in the succession and order in which they act, and with a view to the effect finally produced, which indicates the wisdom of the Great Contriver, is the revelation made in the Bible adapted to the nature and recovery of fallen man, and equally indicative of the same uncreated wisdom.

This is one of the arguments on which the Bible itself rests its own claims to a superhuman origin. In full view of the deadly nature and alarming extent of the spiritual miseries which are the inheritance of our race, its gracious Author proclaims himself the Sovereign Healer. To men whom sin has made poor, and naked, and blind, and miserable, he says, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see.” To men who despise their own mercies, and weary themselves in the pursuit of that they will never find, he says, “Wherefore spend ye your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” To men who are bewildered, without a clue to guide them in the dreary labyrinth, he says, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth after me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the

light of life." To men who thirst for happiness, and find nothing to allay their febrile desires, or cool their parched tongues, his language is, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!" While to the ten thousand wants that lift up their voices and send their cry to the heavens, this Book responds, "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Time and experience have fully justified these high claims. The experiment has been made with every other religion; they have all been "weighed in the balances, and found wanting." It is too late to invent another and a new religion; men are shut up to the Gospel of Christ, as the light of the world and the life of men.

Different views of the excellence of the Bible, make different impressions upon different minds; but if we mistake not, the argument from its adaptation to the character and wants of men, holds a high place with minds of every class.

That martyr to the missionary cause, the Rev. John Williams, of the London Missionary Society, relates a circumstance which took place among the natives of the South Sea islands, which those who have read the biography of this remarkable man will remember. The officers of the British ship *Seringapatam*, after intercourse with a number of the natives who had been converted to Christianity, expressed their doubts whether the views which these ignorant people had uttered on the subject of religion, were

their own views; and even asserted, that both the missionary and these professed converts were practising deception upon their visitors. In order to decide this question, Mr. Williams invited Captain Waldgrave, the Rev. Mr. Watson, the ship's chaplain, and other gentlemen, to an interview with fifteen of the natives, for the purpose of free conversation on religious subjects.

On their being assembled, Captain Waldgrave proposed the question to them, "*Do you believe the Bible is the word of God, and that Christianity is of divine origin?*" The natives were rather startled at the question, having never entertained a doubt upon that point. At length one replied, "*Most certainly we do.*" "And why do you believe it?" After some reflection, one of them said, "*We look at the power with which it has been attended in effecting the entire overthrow of idolatry among us; and which, we believe, no human means could have induced us to abandon.*"

The same question being proposed to a second, he replied, "*I believe the Scriptures to be of divine origin, on account of the system of salvation they reveal. We had a religion before, transmitted to us by our ancestors, whom we considered the wisest of men; but how dark and black a system that was, compared with the bright scheme of salvation presented in the Bible! Here we learn that we are sinners; that God gave his Son Jesus Christ to die for us; and that through believing, the salvation procured becomes ours. Now, what but the*

wisdom of God could have devised such a system as this ?”

The question being repeated to an old and shrewd pagan priest, then a devoted Christian, “instead of replying to it at once, he held up his hands, and rapidly moved the joints of his wrists and fingers; he then opened and shut his mouth; and closed these singular actions by raising his leg, and moving it in various directions. Having done this, he said, ‘*See, I have hinges all over me; if the thought grows in my heart that I wish to handle anything, the hinges in my hands enable me to do so. If I want to utter anything, the hinges of my jaws enable me to say it; and if I desire to go anywhere, here are hinges to my legs, to enable me to walk. Now I perceive great wisdom in the adaptation of my body to the various wants of my mind; and when I look into the Bible, and see there the proofs of wisdom which correspond exactly with these which appear in my frame, I conclude that the Maker of my body is the Author of that book.*’”

This is the sum and substance of the argument from the idea of *adaptation*. Verily, “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained praise, that thou mightest *still the enemy and the avenger!*” Strange that so many wise men after the flesh cannot discern what was so obvious to the mind of this poor heathen! Well is it written of the Saviour, that “he rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed

them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight !” This wonderful moral mechanism, these numberless articulations in the religion of the Bible, so exactly fitted to the numberless cavities of the human mind, playing in them as a ball in a socket, certainly deserve to be considered among the specimens of ineffable wisdom, and are not to be overlooked among the internal proofs that this Book is not the work of creatures.

When Sir Walter Scott returned, a trembling invalid, from Italy to die in his native land, the sight of home so invigorated his spirits that some hope was cherished that he might recover. But he found that he must die. Addressing his son-in-law, he said, “Bring me a *book*.” “What book ?” replied Lockhart. “Can you ask,” replied the man whose works have charmed the world—“can you ask *what* book ?—there is but *one* !” Precious Bible ! There is nothing it does not offer, nothing it does not give to the man who feels his wants and seeks its bounty. Truth that never grows old, riches that never decay, pleasures that never cloy, a crown that is never tarnished, griefs assuaged and fears tranquilized, bright hopes, and incorruptible immortality, are the gift of God to all the lovers of the Bible.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DIVINE ORIGIN OF THE SCRIPTURES ATTESTED
BY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

THERE is one class of proofs for the divine origin of the Scriptures which is of a peculiar sort. Of how much use it may be in convincing an adversary, we shall have something to say before we close the present chapter : to the Christian himself it is the best of all proofs. It is, by way of distinction, called the *inward, or spiritual evidence* ; that is, the evidence applied by the Spirit of God to the heart of the true believer, and which results from his own personal experience of the power of Christian truth. Independently of all the external and historical testimony, and though not independent, yet separate from all other internal and rational evidence, there is a *self-evidencing* power in the Scriptures, which declares, by its influence on the mind and heart of the believer, that they are the word of God.

The Scriptures profess to accomplish, for all those who believe and obey them, what nothing else accomplishes. One way of proving to ourselves that this profession may be relied on, consists in making an honest and practical use of what they reveal. The religion they reveal professes to be a

remedy for the inveterate disease of sin ; to bring to the soul pardon, peace, and progressive holiness ; and the true way of putting the remedy to the test is to *try it*. The language of the Bible to men is, “ Try the remedy this book proposes for yourselves ; see if it be not what it represents itself to be. Prove it ; follow its directions. Do what it requires you to do. If in its practical effects, and in the different stages and degrees of its application, it accomplishes what it professes to accomplish, it will be found worthy of your confidence. If, on the other hand, after a fair and honest trial, it does not accomplish what it professes, let it be pronounced a failure, and looked upon as a trick of moral jugglery and imposture.” With men of fair and ingenuous minds, I see not how such an appeal as this can be resisted, or even trifled with. It must be confessed, that those who adopt this method of ascertaining the divine origin of the Scriptures, have some advantage over those who never make this honest experiment ; while it is with an ill grace that the latter refuse to believe them. It is a very easy way of settling the question ; it would seem, upon all the acknowledged principles of sound reasoning, to be a decisive way ; and it is open to all who have access to the Scriptures.

Has, then, the Bible proved itself a failure ? and are there those who have fairly and honestly brought it to the test of experiment, who are convinced that it is not of God ? Or has it proved itself true to the letter ; and are not all those who “ have obeyed from

the heart that form of doctrine" which it delivers, most thoroughly assured that God is its Author, because the revelations it makes fall in with their own experience? This is the question we propose to discuss; and it is simply a question *of fact*. We have nothing to do just now with the bearing of this fact upon our argument, but simply with the fact itself.

There are those who do not obey the truth revealed in the Bible, and who, for this reason alone, have not this inward evidence that it is the word of God. How should they have it? And there are those who, while they are free to acknowledge their defects, do in some good measure obey it. They are the friends of truth and righteousness. They fear God, and love his Son. They respect his institutions, venerate his law, and make it the great object of their lives so to live as to enjoy his approbation. They are men of prayer, because they are sensible of their dependence on God, and their obligations to him; they are godly men, and men who are habitually influenced more by unseen and eternal realities, than by the things that are seen and temporal. We affirm that this class of men are conscious of an inward and moral sympathy with the disclosures made in the sacred volume, and that their own personal experience falls in with these disclosures.

1. The *great truths of the Bible* are fitted to exert an influence on the internal emotions; they are weighty and important enough to do so; and

they do actually produce a response in the bosom of every right-hearted man.

If you hold up to him a different delineation of the Divine character from that which is presented in the Scriptures, his mind instinctively revolts from it. His hope, his refuge, his portion, the God he loves and rejoices in, is the God of the Bible. The most subtle errorist cannot decoy the friends of God by any artful, or distorted views of the Divine character. Detract from his full-orbed excellence, or obscure its amiableness and glory by any additions of man's devising, and they instantly take the alarm. What the Bible affirms of God, their own hearts affirm: the moral sympathy is complete. Give them his presence and favor, and you cannot make them miserable: deny them these, and you cannot make them happy.

They have the same inward sympathy with the Scriptures in the views they exhibit concerning the sinful character and lost condition of man. Severe as the imputations are which the Bible records against men as sinners, and though they are imputations which no man naturally submits to, and which, if untrue, prove this book to be a false accuser; yet do good men uniformly acquiesce in them, while the best of men have the strongest convictions of their truth. Their own daily confessions are the echo of these humbling statements; while the longer they live, the more do they discover sources of wickedness in themselves, which lead them to wonder how their own character could have been described

in the Bible with so much precision. They are surprised to find how intimate an acquaintance it discovers with their own heart; how it turns it inside out, and ferrets out its inmost recesses.

The same inward sympathy is also felt with the representations which the Bible gives of the way of salvation by Christ. There is no truth which pious men have more honestly put to the test of experience than this. They have tried other remedies, and found no relief either from the curse of the law, or the dominion of sin. They have been driven from every other refuge, and have found in the Lamb of God alone the refuge they were looking for. The Bible tells them of One whose "blood cleanseth from sin," and through whom there is "peace with God;" and they have found it so, in the possession of peace which is as a river, and joys that are like the waves of the sea. The view which a Christian has of the method of salvation by Christ, is entirely different from that of the man whose head only is orthodox. He loves it; he confides in it; it is a view which he takes for himself and for his own soul. It is to him just what the Bible represents it to be; it is "precious;" there is a glory, and majesty, and beauty in it; a fitness and all-sufficiency in it, that mark it as the salvation he needs. It is his home; he cannot live without it. Take it from him, and you crush his hopes: you make him miserable. Whatever may be his powers of intellect, whatever his situation in life, the man who receives this redemption and lives upon it, has

something within him that is the counterpart of this blessed Gospel.

The same sympathy is also experienced with that great truth so much insisted on in the Scriptures, the regeneration of the soul by the Spirit of God. Good men have had a personal experience of the necessity of this change; and they are not unfrequently as conscious of the change itself, as they were of those sinful principles and affections which existed within them before the change took place. They have affections and principles of conduct to which they were once strangers, and which are altogether unlike those which belong to a mere speculative view of this truth. Men who have had the Gospel preached to them for years, and who, as a matter of mere rational inquiry, understood this truth none the better for having heard it so often, have now clear views of it, and views as different from what they once had as light is from darkness.

If from the regenerating, we advert to the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God, and the meliorating, subduing influence of that spiritual religion of which the Scriptures speak, we find them equally responded to by a still, small voice within the soul. Every gracious affection renewed and invigorated is an expression of this sympathy; every breath of prayer is a recognition of it. The bright and brightening constellation of graces that lights up, with its rare lustre, the otherwise dark pathway from time to eternity, is but the reflection of those great truths of the Bible, which shine as a light in a dark place.

The Christian will tell you just what the Bible tells you of the nature of true piety, and the power of that grace by which it is produced and sustained ; and by which, in defiance of inward obstacles and outward foes, it is perpetuated, and matured for heaven. There is that within him that corresponds to the teachings of the Bible without him. The evidence of this correspondence is his own consciousness, which is the best and the strongest evidence. It is the testimony of the work of the Spirit within the soul, uniting with his recorded testimony in the Scriptures. It is the same law written on the fleshly tables of the heart, that is written with pen and ink on the sacred pages. It is the testimony of that same conviction, conversion, and sanctification ; of that same change from darkness to light, and all those gracious affections, desires, hopes and consolations which are spoken of in the Bible, themselves speaking the work of their Author.

2. The Bible is a book of *promises*, “exceeding great and precious promises.” Promises bloom upon this Tree of Life like the blossoms of spring ; nor do they deceive us when autumn comes, and the fruit is gathered. They are promises which respect the life that now is, and that which is to come. They speak of “blessings upon the head of the just,” and of “all that their heavenly Father knoweth that they need.” They are promises of safety “under the shadow of the Almighty,” and of deliverance out of their “many afflictions.” They speak of “their mourning turned into joy ;” of “light arising to

them in the darkness;" and of their "consolations abounding by Christ," as the "sufferings of Christ abound in them." They are promises to the young, to the middle aged, and to the "hoary head when found in the way of righteousness." They are assurances that God is "the Father of the fatherless," and the widow's guardian and avenger "in his holy habitation." To the tempted they are promises of succor; of wisdom to the unwise; of strength to the weak; and to the fearful, of courage and confidence. They speak of pardon and justification, of adoption and sanctification, of free access to God, of "grace to help in the time of need," of strength according to their day, and of perseverance to the end. They are promises of victory over the world, of the Divine presence and love, of God's indwelling Spirit, and of delight and joy in him. There are promises to faith, to repentance, to obedience, and to the sacred observance of the Lord's day. There are promises to the liberal and the merciful, to the meek and the forgiving, and to those who suffer for righteousness' sake. The Bible is in no small degree made up of such gracious engagements; it is God's covenant with his people, to which he has affixed his seal and annexed his oath. His strong and triumphant demand in relation to these engagements is, "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Promises like these throw themselves upon every day's experience and observation. They are easily

brought to the test; and when thus brought, what is the testimony as to their fulfilment? Let the Christian world furnish the answer to this inquiry. Let the infidel world furnish the examples of failure, if it can. Steady and uniform as the perpetual and regular return of seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, and bright and sure as God's bow in the clouds, is the experience of God's people to the truth of his promises. God himself more than once appeals to it as the standing token of his covenant with them, and says to them, "Ye know in all your hearts and all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you." With facts like these before him, who can doubt that God is the Author of the Bible? Is not the life of the Christian an "on-going proof that Scripture is truth?"

3. There is another peculiarity in the instructions of the Bible, which is also easily brought to the test of experience. I allude to its instructions on the *subject of prayer*. It abounds in inculcating the duty of prayer; it speaks largely of the power of prayer; while page after page is devoted to recounting the achievements of prayer. It teaches that God is the "hearer of prayer;" and that "the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." We affirm that the experience of the men of prayer is in remarkable coincidence with the spirit and import of these instructions, and furnishes perpetually accumulative evidence of the truth of the

Sacred Writings. Every Christian *knows* that the God of the Bible is the hearer of prayer. His own history records many a want supplied by prayer; many a vile affection held in check and subdued by prayer; many an unforgiving thought suppressed, and many a tempest of passion passed away amid the calm and unobserved retirement of his closet. He can tell of many a languishing grace revived, many a depressed hope encouraged, many a doubtful and arduous enterprise crowned with success by help received at the throne of the heavenly grace. He can tell of darkness dissipated by prayer; of rough places made plain, and the crooked straight, by prayer; of dangers averted, fears vanquished, and enemies overcome; perplexity removed, and duties for which he was incompetent performed, through prayer. In the time of trouble, prayer has been his refuge; and in the hottest furnace of affliction he has been enabled to say, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation!" How often have public calamities been averted, or deferred, or mitigated by prayer; and where has the Spirit of God descended, and "souls been renewed, and sins forgiven," save through the power of prayer?

Of no fact in the history of the church does the experience of good men furnish more abundant testimony, than of the efficacy of that spirit of holy wrestling which finds its expression and its conquests at the throne of grace. The convictions of pious

men are very strong in this respect, and marvellously uniform. So strong are they, that it is no exaggeration to say, that they appreciate no blessings so highly as those procured by prayer ; nor is there any earthly privilege or comfort of which they would not sooner be denied, than access to the mercy-seat.

Now it strikes us that this is a very remarkable, and indeed an unaccountable fact, unless the instructions of the Bible on the subject of prayer are truthful. It is far otherwise in false religions. Men who offer their supplications to the Virgin Mary, or to departed saints, have no such experience as this. The worshippers of pagan gods pray to idols which their own hands have formed, but receive no answer. The moon is cold and deaf, and turns not from her steady course when oblation after oblation is poured out on the altar of this "queen of heaven." And the sun is listless, when sacrifice upon sacrifice sends upward its costly fragrance, to immingle with his rising, or setting beams. Like the prophets of Baal, when from morning to evening they cried to their absent, or sleeping deity, all such worshippers "find neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any to regard them." We make our appeal to unbelievers themselves, and ask them to tell us from their own observation, if when, as Christian men, we "lift up our heart to God who dwelleth in the heavens," we have no greater evidence that he is the hearer of prayer than the pagan has when he prays to the "host of heaven," or the Musselman when he pays his devotions at the shrine of the false prophet?

“Where are thy gods now? let them arise and save thee, if they can save thee!” The best affections of the Christian heart start into being, and thrill with delight at the mercy-seat. The experience of the men of prayer speaks the language of the Bible; there is no truth uttered by the divine oracles on the whole subject of prayer, diversified as these teachings are, but is, with wonderful precision, verified in their own spiritual history.

4. We pursue this induction of facts only a single step farther. The Scriptures profess to strengthen the people of God on the bed of languishing, and to give them *peace and consolation in death*. These are strong and high professions. We read in the Bible of the “rod and staff” that comfort the believer when he walks through the dark valley; of One who, when “flesh and heart fail,” is the “strength of his heart and his portion forever;” and of peace, and hope, and triumph over the “last enemy.” Whence come these high professions? Who is it, that professes thus to cheer the mind weighed down by the ravages of disease, desolated of all hope from creatures, and shrinking with instinctive dread from the agonies of death and the corruption of the grave? Who is it, in that sad hour when all human vigor and courage are broken and shivered; when all sublunary joys retire, and the tenderest ties that bind man to man are about to be broken, and the agitated spirit must go alone to her last account, that thus professes to soothe its fears and give it hope and confidence?

The Bible does this, and Christian experience teaches the same unutterably precious lesson, and is itself the edifying spectacle of grace thus pledged to take away the sting of death, and from the grave its victory.

If this be not the uniform lesson, yet is it *the* lesson of Christian experience: "*The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death.*" I cannot tell how it is with other ministers of the Gospel, and with other men: for myself I can say, for almost forty years I have been familiar with scenes of sickness and death—among the rich and the poor—amid the ordinary visitations of disease, and amid the raging pestilence; and I cannot recall to my mind a single instance in which I have seen a wicked man die in *peace*. I have seen wicked men die *courageously*, and as though every nerve were wrought up to its highest tension in order to meet the conflict; but I have never seen one go out of the world *peacefully*. I have seen them submit to their fate, because their hour had come, and they could not help it. I have seen them die in stupid and brutish ignorance of their own character as sinners, and of a coming hereafter, just as many a pagan dies; but it was not a peaceful death. I have seen them die under the influence of powerful narcotics, and when they did not know they were dying, and when medical attendants announced that their death was tranquil and without a struggle. I have seen them die in that state of indifference to life which is produced by the languor of disease, the

sorrow of hopeless disappointment, and the agony of pain. I have seen them die in the insensibility of age, in unbelief of the truth, in hardness of heart, and when "there were no bands in their death." And who has not known of multitudes who were even so willing to die, that they "chose strangling, and death rather than life?" But scenes like these no more resemble the triumphant, or even the peaceful death of a Christian, than the death of Nero resembled the death of Moses, or of Paul.

It is not by inspecting such scenes as these, that this question can be brought to a practical test. Place yourself by the bedside of a dying man, whose mind is clear, whose conscience is awake, and who has strong perceptions of his own guilt and an approaching eternity; and it will be found that such a man dies in peace, and only he, who has found peace in that Saviour "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." If it be said that Christians themselves do not always die triumphantly, or even peacefully, we grant that it is so. A good man may die suddenly, and have no time for thought; he may die in a state of intellectual debility, or derangement, which incapacitates him even for hope; he may die when his loins are not girt about him, and his lamp is not trimmed and burning, and therefore he may die under the hidings of God's countenance, and pass away under the cloud; while in fact, his death never partakes of the agony and remorse of the wicked, and in the ordinary dispensations of Divine Providence, is full of

peace and joy. And it deserves consideration, that his death is the more full of joy and peace in believing, in proportion to the clearness and strength of his views of those truths and realities, which, the more clearly they are seen and felt, the more certainly do they carry consternation and dismay to the dying sinner. No sense of the dying Christian's ill desert diminishes his confidence in atoning blood and abounding grace; no strong conceptions of a holy God disturb his tranquillity, but rather do they fill him with rejoicing; no receding world, no approaching eternity agitates him, because this world is not his rest, and his home is eternity.

Time would fail me to tell how Christians die; nor can anything save the pen of the recording angel, who has stood by their bed of death and borne them to Abraham's bosom, narrate the unnumbered instances of their delightful departure from the present world, which verify the truth of the Bible. "I could never have believed," said a dying saint, "that it was so delightful a thing to die; or that it was possible to have such views of the heavenly world as I now enjoy." The memorable Melancthon, just before he died, chanted in his sleep the words, "I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." He seemed restless, and on being asked by one near him, "Whether there were anything more that he desired?" replied, "*Aliud nihil, nisi cælum*—nothing more, unless it be heaven." The most forbidding aspect now and then presented by the Christian's death, is that of rigid

scrutiny into the foundation of his hopes, or pensive and submissive tenderness, that he is denied those bright lights which he fondly hoped to enjoy. As a general fact, "the chamber where the good man meets his fate" unfolds the scenes of heavenly mercy; it presents the theory of Christian truth, in the experience of a mind that knows how to value it. And therefore it may be experience that varies from a hesitating, to a vigorous faith; from a mournful remembrance of the past, to an exulting anticipation of the future; from the tranquillity of a peaceful, to the bursting joys of a rapturous mind: yet is it true to God, and true to his word.

Infidels themselves see and feel the weight of such facts as these; and not a few of them have been constrained to adopt the language, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" A writer in the *Scottish Mirror* affirms of David Hume, that, having witnessed in the family of the venerable La Roche those consolations which the Gospel alone could impart, he confessed, with a sigh, "that there were moments when, amidst all the pleasures of philosophical discovery, and the pride of literary fame, *'he wished that he had never doubted.'*"

We will not say, such are the facts on which we rest our statement; for they are but a partial exemplification of the facts on which we rest the proposition, that *there is a self-evidencing power in the Scriptures to every man who cordially receives them, which declares, by its influence on his own soul, that*

they are the word of God. We proceed to suggest several considerations, with the view of showing the importance of the facts we have stated, and the influence they claim in the argument in favor of Divine inspiration. Here we beg the objector to give all the force they deserve to the following remarks.

1. In the first place, the *positive conviction arising from the Christian's experience of the truth of the divine oracles, cannot be philosophically overthrown by the mere negative conviction of the Deist who has no such experience.* A million of negatives cannot overturn one positive. It is no proof that you do not see the light of the sun, that men who are born blind never saw it. It is no proof that the Christian's experience does not verify the truths of revelation, that the experience of men who are not Christians never verifies it. If the believer "has the witness in himself," it does not falsify his testimony that the unbeliever has no such witness. The testimony of the unbeliever is not opposing testimony; it is simply no testimony at all. It would be worse than childish for a jury to pronounce a man innocent of the crime for which he stands arraigned, because ten men declare under oath that they *did not* see him commit it, so long as five credible witnesses affirm that they *did see* him. Nor is this a stronger case than the one under consideration. The testimony of one creditable witness to a fact which he himself has observed, would overturn the negatives of half the world. Negation, in the law of evidence,

is nothing ; it is simply opposing nothing to something. An experienced Christian, weak though he may be in all other sources of proof, is immovable in this. He is more than a match for the subtle sceptic. The sceptic has doubts, the Christian has knowledge ; the sceptic has theory, the Christian has matter of fact.

2. It is of some importance also to remark, in the second place, that *this inward testimony to the truth of the Bible is founded on good and solid reasons.*

The Deist replies to the Christian, who reasons as we have been reasoning, All this is a matter of mere feeling ; it is simply your own impression ; it cannot be argued out, but is a fancy of your own ! No, it is not so : it is argument ; it is a just and irrefragable conclusion from premises that are true. Those premises are, that there is no effect without an adequate cause ; the conclusion is, that the effect produced by the Bible on the mind and heart of the Christian, is one whose cause is God. They are effects which nothing else can produce. Everything else has been tried—tried in every form, in every age, and by all the combinations of human power and human wisdom—and has proved a failure. If the Bible does not produce them, it is false to its own engagements ; if it does produce them, it is true. This is one of the points on which it has committed itself. Its language is, “*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.*” “*Taste*

and see that the Lord is good." "If any man *will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.*" No system of falsehood would ever have ventured to make such appeals as these. It is the easiest thing in the world for infidels to put the claims of the Bible to this test: they have but to do as it requires them to do, and the issue is perfectly decisive. It so happens that every man who does this, all the world over, finds out, that "the anointing which abideth in him is truth, and no lie." "Come see a man," says the woman of Samaria, "that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" The same strong conviction was produced on the minds of her countrymen, and from the same cause. "Many believed on him *because of his own word*; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but because we have heard him ourselves; and we *know* that this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world." This was the method which the first disciples and apostles of Jesus pursued in order to bring to the test his extraordinary claims. Those whom his personal character seemed to convince, and whom his instructions did not convince, did not long continue to follow him. Those who were convinced, even by his miracles, and were not obedient to his doctrines, but offended by them, "went back, and walked no more with him;" while those who obeyed his voice, forsook all, and followed him; and when others went away, exclaimed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast *the words of eternal life*; and we believe,

and *are sure* that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God !”

The Christian’s experience of *the truth of the Divine promises and the power of prayer*, is of the same convincing kind. If the Bible is false in these particulars, it is no difficult matter to detect the falsehood. Prayer cannot be answered, nor these promises fulfilled, except by God. He who is the hearer of prayer, and who fulfils the promises, must be concerned in the government of the world, as no other being is concerned save Him who made it. If he thus hears the prayers of his people, and accomplishes these promises, every answered prayer and accomplished promise furnishes evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures. They ask, and receive : what is this but a witness that this Book is divine ? They obey a direction of the Bible, and find the accompanying promise fulfilled ; and what is this but proof that the direction and the promise are from God ? If promises and directions like these were false, they would carry with them their own condemnation ; the whole course of Divine Providence would testify against them, and give them the lie. No impostor would thus jeopard his veracity ; nor would such pretensions ever have occurred to the mind of an impostor. If the Bible is the word of God, it may well thus commit itself, because its Author is both able and willing to redeem the pledge. His honor is concerned in making it good ; while the experience of its fulfilment testifies, that the Book which reveals it is not the work of man. The

argument from Christian experience, therefore, is not a mere impression of imagination, or overweening enthusiasm ; it is sober, convincing argument. Christian men are living witnesses for God's truth ; they *know* that the Bible is not of earthly origin ; they have no more doubt of it than they have that the sun shines in the heavens. It is impossible for the subtleties, or the clamors of false philosophy, to diminish the strength of this inward conviction. The most unlettered Christian, shut out from the world, and in the remote recesses of the wilderness, has evidence of the truth of the Bible, within his own soul, which all the sophistry in the world cannot invalidate.

3. There is a third remark, which presents this internal and spiritual evidence still more clearly in the light of rational conviction. It relates to *the nature of the evidence which gives rise to all those convictions of the human mind which flow from experience and consciousness*. It is the perfection of reasoning when the mind, by due process of argument, cannot help coming to the conclusion to which the argument would conduct it. By the universal consent of mankind, there are intuitive and instinctive principles of belief that are not the result of any process of induction, because they are self-evident ; they are too plain to be established by any such process ; nor is there anything more evident than they themselves are, by which such process may be conducted. The most conclusive argument does nothing more than unite propositions which are

of questionable verity with those which are unquestioned, and thus establish the unknown by logically identifying it with the known. But let it not be forgotten, that the nature of evidence is adapted to its subject. There is a difference between reasoning and consciousness; nor is there any need of reasoning, where we have the evidence of consciousness. There is a difference between demonstration and inspection; for inspection supersedes the necessity of demonstration. There is a difference too between coming to a logical conclusion, and making a practical experiment. You may demonstrate the chemical properties of an acid, or an alkali, and thus come to a scientific and just conclusion of their nature; and you may taste them, and with equal certainty ascertain their properties by experience. There is likewise the evidence of sense, as well as the evidence of reason. When you *see* the light of the sun, you do not need any other proof that it *is* light; when you *hear* sound, you do not need any other proof that it is sound. These subjects do not admit of any other evidence than the evidence of the senses. When you touch a pillar of marble, you know that it is cold and hard, because it *feels* so; and this is all the evidence you ask for. The nature of evidence is adapted to its subject.

This remark, and these illustrations of it, present the thought I wish to convey in relation to those convictions of the mind which flow from experience and consciousness. The mind of man has its senses as well as his body. It has a sense of beauty and

deformity, of right and wrong. Particular classes of men have a quicker and more keen apprehension and sense of some subjects, than other classes. A poet has a keen and intuitive discernment of the beauties of poetry; a musician, of the harmony of sounds; an artist, of the beauties of painting; an architect, of the beautiful proportions of an edifice. No man judges of subjects of this sort by those laws of reasoning by which his conclusions are formed of the agreement of different parts of a mathematical theorem, or logical syllogism; because there are other laws of his nature besides his reasoning faculties, which are necessarily consulted.

Now Christianity addresses itself, not to the intellect and reason of men merely, but to their moral nature—to their heart and conscience—to what may properly be called their *spiritual senses*. The man who has experienced its power, possesses this inward sense of its truth and reality. When the light of truth shines upon his mind, he knows it to be truth because he sees it. When the voice of God, his Maker, falls upon his ear, he asks for no other evidence that it is God's voice, than that he hears it. It is a well-known voice; there is no other voice like it, or to whose accents his mind so vibrates, and which produces the same inward emotions. It is the voice of the Good Shepherd, leading his flock in green pastures, and by the still waters. "My sheep," says he, "know my voice, and follow me; a stranger they will not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." Good men love God, and love

his truth. They read the Scriptures with a different state of mind from that with which they are read by others. They possess a "spiritual discernment of spiritual things"—a peculiar tact in judging of their excellence and beauty. They judge by the heart, as well as by the understanding; and though in other respects they may be ignorant men, it is perfectly rational that they should believe them to be the word of God, if for no other evidence, than that the truths they reveal have their counterpart in their own experience. The man who has tasted honey, as certainly knows it is sweet, as the chemist who has tested its properties by scientific analysis. Plain and unsophisticated men believe vastly more truths on the evidence of their own experience, than they believe by the more tedious process of reasoning. It is by the same sure process of experiment that they believe the truths of Christianity. They have tried it; they have found that it accomplishes all that it professes to accomplish. The time was when they saw it in a different light, because they inspected it with a different state of mind. Since the love of God has controlled their inquiries, they have a key, by which this cabinet of truth may be unlocked, and its treasures explored. "*He that loveth not,*" says the apostle, "*knoweth not God, for God is love.*" The conclusion is a most logical one. How should a man have any just conceptions of a Being whose nature is *love*, when himself knows nothing about *love*? No more than a purely malignant man knows what kindness is, or a purely

revengeful man knows what a forgiving spirit is, or a blind man knows what color is, can a man who loves not, know what God is. Our perception of the moral character of our fellow men arises from sympathy; it is when heart meets heart, and love responds to love, that we see into one another's bosom. We know what men are, because we ourselves feel, or have felt like them. Not until the heart of man corresponds to the heart of God, is God known. Christianity therefore speaks for itself, and carries its own evidence within it, wherever its power is felt.

Nor is there any mysticism in this: it involves a principle of every day's concernment. The Deist replies, "This may be evidence that satisfies the man who feels it, but it is no argument with one who does not feel it; I have read the Bible, and find no such effects from it; to my mind it is a book of absurdities!" Let us test this objection, and see where it will end. Set the Deist to reason with an Atheist. The Atheist may ask him, "Why do you believe there is a God?" The Deist replies, "I see such evidences of design; such beauty, grandeur, order, and harmony throughout the creation, that to my mind it is impossible that it should not have been the product of a designing Cause." The argument is good; but it rests on the Deist's perception of design, order, and harmony. What if the Atheist replies, "Your impressions of design and harmony are all superstition; I have never seen any such indications in the created universe: the evidence

may do well enough for the man who feels it, but to my mind it is no evidence at all!" Here, then, the Deist is in a dilemma; he must give up his objection to the reasoning of the believer in Christianity, which is founded on his perceptions of its excellence, or he must yield to the reasoning of the Atheist, against his own perceptions of the order and harmony in the works of creation. He must, upon his own principles, either become an Atheist or a Christian. We are bold, therefore, to affirm, that the spiritual perception by which every good man judges of the divine origin of the Scriptures, is as infallible as the perceptions of the Deist of the excellence of the religion of nature; as infallible as the perceptions of the poet, or the artist, of the excellence of painting or poetry; as infallible as the corporeal senses themselves, though acting in different spheres, and conversant with different objects. There is no stronger evidence; it is the evidence of consciousness. Let men read and obey the Bible, and they will know that it is from God. The more experimentally and practically they become acquainted with it, and the more they are imbued with its spirit, the more competent are they to decide on the question of its divine origin from their own experience, and the more certainly will they decide according to truth.

4. There is a fourth remark, which gives still additional force to this argument. *This testimony from experience is fortified by a great number of witnesses, and of great variety of external condition and nat-*

ural character. Suppose a man of matured intelligence and unimpeachable veracity were travelling alone on an unfrequented path, and saw some unusual phenomenon in the heavens, which he could not account for, and which he himself could scarcely be persuaded was a reality. The more he inspects it, however, the more is he convinced that it is no delusion, and that his senses have not deceived him. Now it would not be surprising, if, in giving a narrative of what he had seen, even those who had the strongest confidence in his veracity should entertain doubts of his statement ; nor would it be unnatural for them to conclude, that he had been deceived by some optical illusion, or his own imagination. But if twenty, or fifty other persons, with whom he had had no communication, should testify that they had witnessed the same phenomenon from other and different points of observation, there would certainly be more reason to conclude that his narrative is worthy of being believed. But suppose that thousands in different parts of the land, and millions in different portions of the earth, should testify that they had simultaneously seen the same phenomenon, and that their descriptions of it should all agree ; suppose that among these millions there are persons of both sexes, of all ages, of all natural temperaments, of all classes of society, and of all degrees of intellectual cultivation ; it most certainly would be in accordance with all the laws of evidence, and a perfectly rational thing, to conclude that his narrative is true. Yet is this but a faint illustration of the remark, that the

testimony for the divine origin of the Scriptures from experience, is fortified by a great number of witnesses, of great variety of external condition and natural character.

All Christians have this internal and spiritual evidence. All testify to the reality of the change, wrought, through the instrumentality of the Bible, upon their own hearts; the effect produced by it on their own minds and character is different from that produced by any other book in the world; nor is it possible for any other to produce the same moral transformation. It has disclosed to them the inmost recesses of their own bosoms, which nothing else could do. When polluted, it has made them holy; when anxious and troubled, it has given them peace; when miserable, it has made them happy. It has given the most accurate and vivid representation of their sorrows and their joys, their burdens and their relief, their temptations and their succors, their doubts and their confidence, their fears and their hopes, their unfaithfulness and their relentings, their conflicts and their triumphs; which no book could give unless its Author knew what was in man, and is able to write out their own inward history.

It adds too not a little to the force of their testimony, that this experience is felt in all ages of the world, from righteous Abel down to the present hour. It is found in all climates, and under all forms of government. It is the same in the cottages of Greenland, and in the valleys of the Vaudois; in polished Europe, and in the savage wilderness; on

the continents, and in the islands. Oceans may separate them ; natural causes, of every variety, may exert their appropriate influence upon their character ; but everywhere the same experience, resulting from the same cause, and producing the same conviction that that cause is God, pervades them all. No matter what their sex, or condition—whether they be children, or men of gray hairs ; whether they be Cromwell and the Lady Jane Grey on their thrones, or Boaz and Ruth in the harvest field ; whether they be Zuingle on the battle ground, or Howard in his counting-room, or John Newton praying at the mast-head :—everywhere, and in all, thought corresponds to thought, and emotion to emotion. The same high-born and impelling force sends the same life-blood through every artery and vein of the spiritual body. And to give greater force still to their testimony, it is given with the same uniformity and explicitness by all classes of minds and temperaments. The gifted, as well as those of ordinary endowments ; the sanguine and the phlegmatic ; the cautious and reserved ; the rash and communicative ; the poet and the historian ; the sensitive artist, and the cool philosopher—all have the same spiritual sympathies, and speak the same spiritual language.

There are but two ways in which this testimony can be repelled : the one is, by supposing the witnesses to be *deceivers* ; the other, by supposing them to be *deceived*. That they are all deceivers, will hardly be urged by the grossest infidel. They are

those in whom infidels themselves have confidence, and who, in all matters of secular trust, are confessedly good men and true. That they are deceived, is scarcely possible. It might be possible with one, with ten, with fifty; but can it be possible with thousands, with millions—unknown to each other, and between whom there is no intercourse, no connivance, no concert; and whose sympathies are common only where they are derived from the Bible as a common source? This is the magnet, which attracts all hearts with which it comes in contact—the spiritual magnet, which, as from a common centre, sends out its ten thousand electric wires, and by its telegraphic power holds communication with the most distant minds, simultaneously answering to the testimony first announced in heaven.

Let it not therefore be wondered at, that Christian men place strong dependence upon this spiritual and internal evidence.

“A Christian dwells, like Uriel, in the sun;
Meridian evidence puts doubt to flight,
And ardent hope anticipates the skies.”

It is no preponderance of probabilities on which such a man rests his assurance of the divine origin of the Bible. It is not possible to persuade him to renounce it for any false religion, however plausible and captivating it may be, and however artful its seductions.

This is emphatically the *poor man's* argument

for the divine origin of the Sacred Writings. He may have no other evidence within his reach, but this satisfies him. Of the witness of antiquity, of logic, and history, and the fulfilment of prophecy, he may know nothing ; but this one thing he knows, that the Bible is to his own soul the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. He has found it what it professes to be : this is his argument. He feels that it was written on purpose for him : this is his argument. It speaks to him as no other book speaks : this is his argument. Man could not speak thus : this is his argument. “It were like telling him, that a creature spread out the firmament and inlaid it with worlds, to tell him that this proffered salvation is the device of impostors, or the figment of enthusiasts. He that believeth, hath the testimony written in his own bosom, not by those sensible exhibitions of Divine power by which the laws of nature are arrested, but by power equally great and wondrous, the omnipotent power of the Spirit of God. Others may admire the shield which the industry and the ingenuity of learned men have thrown over Christianity ; they may speak of the solid rampart cast up by the labors of ages, and pronounce the faith inaccessible, because history, philosophy and science, have all combined to gird round it the iron and the rock of a ponderous and colossal demonstration.” But the fact most to be gloried in is, “that the Scripture commends itself to the conscience, and experience bears out the Bible—that the Gospel can go the round of the world, and

carry with it, in all its travel, its own mighty credentials."

If the infidel does not confide in representations like these, if he does not give the argument any credence, it is matter of grief to us, but we cannot help it. There is no alternative for him between a true faith in Christianity, and living and dying without God, and without hope; between cleaving to God's testimonies, and absolute despair; between glorying in them, and being overwhelmed with shame and everlasting contempt.

"Ah me! the laurell'd wreath that murder wears,
Blood nurs'd, and watered by the widow's tears,
Seems not so foul, so tainted, or so dread,
As waves the night-shade round the sceptic's head."

"For judgment am I come into this world," says the great Author of the Bible, "that they which see not, might see; and that they which see, might be made blind." Men who know too much to be taught of God, must be left to their own blinding delusions.

From my heart do I pity the man, who shuts the eyes of his understanding against the intrinsic evidence which this Book possesses of its heavenly origin. Would he allow it to speak its own facts and its own doctrines, without mutilation and in all their richness; would he allow it to utter its own promises and its own threatenings, its own love and mercy, its own heaven and its own hell; he would find that it is no more the work of man than the sun

in the heavens—no more a system of deception than the sun itself is a globe of ice.

We part with the infidel, but we do not willingly part with him ; nor do we leave him in the spirit of unkindness. There *are* truths of the Bible known to himself, and demonstrated by his *own* experience. We affectionately and earnestly invite him to a field of thought, which his own heart has not yet explored. We bid him rove over it from flower to flower, and from its vernal promise to its rich harvest ; pledging him, that if he does so he shall not lose his reward. Let him prove the Bible by giving *all* its truths the trial of experience. Let him taste the honey, as well as the gall : they are sweet fountains, pure fountains, clear as crystal, from the throne of God and the Lamb.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIBLE ACCORDANT WITH HUMAN REASON.

CHRISTIANITY would fain make converts of all classes of men. It would win and gain over the high and the low, the rich as well as the poor, the enlightened and thinking part of mankind, as well as the more uninformed. Men there are who regard it as making demands upon their credulity, which they feel themselves called on to resist. They look upon it as so repugnant to the first principles of reasoning and the ordinary laws of credibility, that, instead of commending itself to human reason, it is an outrage upon common sense. We have no hope of rendering it acceptable to the hearts of such men; while we may hope to rescue it from the charge of this monstrous absurdity. We are anxious to do so for the interests of truth, and because truth is the appointed means of salvation.

It requires but little acquaintance with the world to perceive, that one of the causes which contributes to confirm a certain class of men in their disbelief, is the impression that the claims of Christianity cannot be vindicated by human reason; and that, in order to receive it, they must forego all the authority of dispassionate and fair argument. The object of

the present chapter is to throw out several suggestions, with the view of obviating this difficulty, and, so far as we are able, setting the claims of the Christian religion, in this particular, somewhat in their true light. We have a strong conviction, that this religion is distinguished from all false religions by its perfect agreement with reason. While all other systems of religion are deficient, or absurd and contradictory, this alone will bear examination; the more severe the examination, the better does it stand the test. It is a perfectly rational thing. It makes no demands upon a senseless credulity, nor in approaching it are men solicited to leave their own minds behind them, or throw away their reasoning faculties.

By *reason*, I understand that faculty of the mind by which it distinguishes truth from falsehood, and enables us to deduce truths that are unknown from those that are known. It is a faculty which exists in different power in different minds. There is a Mind in the universe which perceives all truth intuitively; there are other minds which arrive at it by a slow and more laborious process. The *act of reasoning* consists in judging of the truth of propositions brought before the mind, and inferring conclusions which are so just and natural, and which so necessarily result from the propositions thus presented, that they are intuitively perceived. In investigating the question, for example, whether the Scriptures are of divine origin, we go back to these first and universal truths which thus lie at the foun-

dation of all reasoning ; which are sustained by an appeal to every man's consciousness, and which are believed because it is impossible not to believe them. If the Bible is true, the truth of it must rest on this solid foundation. On no subject whatever are reason and argument more fitly employed, therefore, than in investigating this momentous question. If its divine authority cannot be substantiated by fair reason and argument, or if reason and argument can overthrow it, it is no longer worthy of confidence.

But it may not be forgotten, that, in order to reason justly on religious subjects, *men must have the opportunity and the means of reasoning*. The truth of this remark neither requires, nor needs evidence in proof of it. Be it political, or legal science ; be it in the physical, or the more exact sciences ; in order to reason successfully, or even safely, men must not only possess the faculty and power of reason, but the opportunity and means of reasoning. These consist in a greater or less degree of *knowledge and information on the subjects about which they reason*. A lucid argument on the subject of civil government requires some degree of acquaintance with the science of civil government ; a convincing argument on the law of bailments, or insurance, requires legal attainments ; the solution of a difficult problem in geometry requires no inconsiderable advancement in mathematical learning. So it is with regard to questions of a religious kind. As men cannot reason safely on any other subject without some degree of information on the subject about

which they reason, it is indispensable they should have some degree of religious information before they can reason on the subject of religion. Reason is fitted to *the perception of truth*, and must therefore have the opportunity and means of perceiving it. Whatever is *true*, sooner or later falls in with the conclusions of reason. One mind may discover it later, and by a more tedious process, than another; but when perceived, it is equally believed by both. Truth does not depend on our perceiving it; nor is it less true when perceived by other minds, though unperceived by our own. A religious truth that is worked out by the tardy process of human reasoning, is not the less true because it is intuitively discovered by a mind that is more exalted; nor is it less true, though we receive it on the testimony of his perceptions. Nor, when it is reached by the process of reasoning, is it less true because it is first perceived by those who have superior knowledge and superior means of reasoning; for when we ourselves come to possess the same knowledge and the same means, we shall perceive it as well as they. The more our sources of religious knowledge are increased, and the greater the variety of religious truths with which our minds are furnished, the better are we fitted to reason on the subject; and if we follow the sound and true dictates of reason, the more confidently may we rely on our conclusions.

There are several sources of information, and means and opportunities of reasoning, on religious subjects. One of these is the *Book of Nature*.

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.” “Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of heaven, and they shall tell thee. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?” One of them is the *Book of Providence*, where, from facts in the history of the world, as well as events which take place under our own observation, important lessons are learned concerning God as the great Governor, and men as his responsible subjects. These instructions are valuable in proportion to their plainness and extent. They are so, because they utter the *voice of God*; they are a *revelation of his will*; they constitute some of the forms in which *he himself addresses truth to the minds of his creatures*. Nor is there anything that is *unreasonable* in such a revelation as this. It is reasonable to suppose that the creation should speak for its Creator, and that the government which he is exercising over his creatures, by his providence, should speak to them in language of no equivocal import. I have yet to learn that any class of infidels have called in question the reasonableness of such a revelation.

But what if, in addition to such a revelation, it has pleased God to make a more full disclosure of his mind and will? Is there anything *unreasonable* in this hypothesis? The Bible professes to be such a revelation: is there anything *unreasonable* in what

it reveals? Let us direct our thoughts a few moments to these two inquiries.

Is it unreasonable that such a revelation should be made, in addition to the disclosures of nature and providence? It is the province of reason, not to originate truth, but to discover it. *Can* it discover, from these sources alone, all that is necessary for men to know? Can it discover it with that certainty that satisfies the philosophic, or to that extent which satisfies the popular mind? Socrates and Seneca did not think so—the civil and popular theology of the pagan world bears uniform testimony that “the world by wisdom knew not God.” To the great purpose of man’s existence as a moral and immortal being, the works and providence of God have spoken in vain. So far as they regard the Divine counsels respecting our fallen race, they have spoken in vain. If it were reasonable that He who is the light of the universe should not leave this lower world in darkness that may be felt; if it were reasonable that the Father of mercies and the God of the spirits of all flesh should stretch forth his hand to rescue his falling children from the bottomless abyss; it is reasonable to look for a more abundant and hopeful revelation than is contained in his works of creation and providence. “Let reason count the stars, weigh the mountains, fathom the depths—the employment becomes her, and the success is glorious. But when the question is, ‘How shall man be just with God?’ reason must be silent, revelation must speak.”

If, then, there is nothing unreasonable in the hypothesis that God should give men a more full revelation, *is there anything unreasonable in the revelation itself, which professes to have God for its Author?* In replying to this inquiry, several distinct thoughts deserve consideration.

All will agree, that a religion that *has* God for its Author, cannot be unreasonable. Whether we can discover it to be so, or not, it must be a reasonable religion. Better were it to impeach our own reason, than his. Nor is this altogether a “begging the question,” or “reasoning in a circle.” To exalt reason above its own place, is to debase it: to set the human in rivalry with the Divine, is to make it contemptible. The Bible claims to be a reasonable religion; to require a “reasonable service;” to reveal “the words of truth and soberness.” Reason in creatures is essentially the same with reason in the Deity; save that, while their conclusions are arrived at, for the most part with difficulty, his are intuitively made; and while with them reason is finite, and liable to err, in the Divine mind it is unerring and infinite. The most reasonable Being in the universe cannot be the author of an unreasonable revelation. The God of heaven does not need to be instructed, and dictated to by human reason: human reason needs to be tutored and schooled by Divine wisdom. Whether the system of truth and piety revealed in the Scriptures, does or does not, *in our judgment*, coincide with sound reason, we have the highest evidence the nature of the case

admits, that it does so in fact. This, however, is not the ground on which we rest the reasonableness of the religion revealed in the Scriptures. The question, whether this religion is or is not intrinsically contrary to reason, is not out of place.

I remark therefore, further, *It is no objection to the reasonableness of this religion, that it contains truths which human reason itself could never have discovered.* There are those who hold that nothing is reasonable, save that which human reason originally discovers. But is it so, that there is nothing known to the minds of angels, or to the mind of the Infinite Deity, that is unknown to men? If human reason could have devised the system of truth and grace found in the Bible, there had been *no need* of a supernatural revelation. It is not denied that truths are here revealed that could never have been known but for Divine teaching. The utmost powers of the human mind fail in the effort to discover them; nor, untaught of God, could they ever have proved them to be true. Unaided reason had not the remotest suggestion, or hint of some of them, until they were disclosed by light from heaven. Imagination herself did not venture a faint foreshadowing of them. Human reason had no creed, no fixed opinions, in relation to problems which the Bible solves to the satisfaction of the merest tyro in the school of Christ. The solution of them had not its antetype in the human mind: it was nowhere, save in the mind of the Deity, and in the deep counsels of the eternity where he dwells.

We say to those persons who have persuaded themselves that human reason could have accomplished all that was necessary for man's salvation, that the moral history of our world, nay, the history of the universe shows, that when once any race of creatures have fallen from their primeval integrity, it is beyond the limits of reason, whether in the human or the angelic mind, to devise a method by which they may be restored to the Divine favor. The angelic race who fell, with all their lofty powers of intellect, have not, during the progress of tedious centuries of suffering, discovered any way of escape. It is perfectly obvious that, on the apostacy of our first parents, all expectation of recovery from the efforts of their own reason was a forlorn hope. Nor has it been in the power of their descendants, during the progress of six thousand years, in any part of the world, to ascertain from the lights of reason and nature, whether God will forgive sin. Human reason has had full and unobstructed opportunity to make the discovery—among all nations and every clime, in ages of ignorance and barbarism, and in ages of great intellectual cultivation and vigor; and the result shows, that the most acute philosopher, and the degraded child of the forest, are alike ignorant of those truths which bring relief to the solicitude and despondency of man when contemplating his character as a sinner. The various religions of man's devising are everywhere the religions of penalty, of fear: the basis of them all is a deep and inwrought impression of the awful majesty of God

as the Avenger. It is perfectly accordant with the dictates of reason, therefore, that a revelation that meets the wants of man should itself be, not the creature of reason, but of God.

As a consequence of this position, *it is altogether reasonable*, that a religion, revealed from heaven, should *contain truths that are above and beyond the power of human reason to comprehend*. Infidels and rationalists object to the Bible, and affirm that it is contrary to reason, because it contains *mysterious* truths. But why should it be thought unreasonable, that a system of truth, which is confessedly beyond the power of man's devising, should contain truths which convict human reason of imbecility? What is there irrational and illogical in the position, that the wisdom of man is confounded and baffled before "the deep things of God?" We affirm, that *it is most reasonable* to believe that a revelation from God contains some such mysterious features. It is for such truths among others, if not for such truths mainly, that such a revelation is needed. Now that it reveals them, so far from being any objection to the divine origin of the revelation, they remain among the evidences of its divine origin. They constitute one of the proofs that such a revelation is consistent with the highest reason. They are truths that are unwelcome to the proud and selfish heart of man; truths which show that human reason, with all its self-confidence, has its boundaries; and at the same time truths which reason, unless strangely recreant to her own prerogative, is constrained to honor.

There are truths above the *discovery* of human reason, and which, when revealed, reason *comprehends*; and there are also those which, when revealed, are above its comprehension. There are more of the former than the latter; while the latter are, if possible, of greater importance, because they are so intimately connected with the most important practical truths of Christianity. The doctrine of the Trinity, and of the Incarnation, are mysterious and incomprehensible truths. They are *revealed as mysteries*; they are *facts*, the existence of which is affirmed by the testimony of Him who cannot lie, and believed on that testimony. But there is nothing contradictory in the statements we find of them in the Bible; there is nothing in these statements that contradicts any other truth which the Scriptures reveal; nor has it ever been shown, nor can it be, that they are inconsistent with reason. Though man's reason does not comprehend them, the reason of the Great God comprehends them; and for all that we know, in a future and more advanced state of being, they may be comprehended by creatures. In a revelation from the incomprehensible God, it is not unreasonable to look for some incomprehensible truths. His nature leads us to look for them; his works lead us to look for them; his providence leads us to look for them: it was to be expected that the Bible would contain them. "Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" It were a fault, rather than an excellence in the Scriptures—it were in ill

keeping with the revelations God has made of himself elsewhere, did they contain no mysteries. Did they not contain them, infidels themselves would have laid hold of this fact as proof of imposture. It is no impeachment of the Divine wisdom, or goodness, that the Bible contains them ; nor are they the less reasonable, because they cannot be explained. We have no right to claim of God, that all that he reveals should be divested of incomprehensibleness. Such a curiosity were unhallowed ; nor could any limit be assigned to it, if once indulged. Angels do not comprehend all that God has revealed ; and why should man be dissatisfied ?

That no man can rationally believe *facts* which he does not comprehend, is, of all positions, one of the most unreasonable and absurd. If it is reasonable to believe *facts* which he cannot comprehend, it is reasonable to believe truths which he cannot comprehend ; for truth is but the veracious statement of facts. The objector himself believes a multitude of such truths, and regulates his conduct by them every day. Some of them he perceives intuitively : they are, indeed, too plain to be capable of proof by any logical process. He cannot explain the very union between his own body and mind ; nor the action of his thoughts upon his will ; nor the influence of his will upon his outward conduct ; nor the manner in which his own mind holds intercourse with other minds, any more than he can explain how God was manifest in the flesh, or how his Spirit acts upon the soul in fitting it for heaven. He cannot

escape from the region of incomprehensibleness, go where he will. A revelation that instructs him in the nature of the incomprehensible God; in his counsels and government; in the method of his incomprehensible grace, and in an incomprehensible eternity; bears a relation to realities so vast and immeasurable, that it is constantly bordering on mystery. It is incomprehensible, for the very reason that it is true—truth that must be incomprehensible, because it is lofty and sublime as its Author. These are the truths, in the contemplation of which “they in heaven veil their faces with their wings.” You cannot dishonor these wondrous truths, without dishonoring their wondrous Source. You cannot discard them without discarding his whole revelation; without tearing away the foundations of human hope; without uprooting the truth which sustains the branches and the fruit of immortality. Those very truths of the Bible, therefore, which to the slight inspection of the rationalist appear the most objectionable to human reason, are truths which human reason might well presume such a revelation would contain.

But we cannot establish the position we have taken in the present chapter, without *directing our thoughts somewhat more minutely to some of the great truths and principles which the Bible reveals, for the purpose of seeing if they do not constitute a reasonable system.* If we mistake not, there are grounds and reasons for these truths sufficient to satisfy every sober and dispassionate mind. They are at war with no previous truths revealed by the

lights of nature and reason, and inscribed on the consciences of men ; but are, on the other hand, in perfect harmony with them all. It is indeed a presumptuous service which we assign to human reason, to sit in judgment upon the truths which the unerring Oracle of the universe has revealed, and whose “ways are past finding out.” But for the sake of the argument, we will give the infidel this vantage ground, and ask him to look into the Bible, and indicate to us the truths against which human reason rebels.

The leading truths, and those on which all the rest depend, are few, and are very intelligibly revealed. They are, the sovereign right of the Great God to give law to his creatures—the apostate character and lost condition of man as the transgressor of that law—the great remedy which the Gospel provides for the pardon and justification of all those who truly receive it—the provision which it makes for their personal holiness and sanctification—and the unalterable retributions of the eternal world. Let common sense inspect these doctrines ; let reason investigate them ; let philosophy analyze them—let her intellectual resources be taxed to the uttermost ; and they can find nothing in them that is not worthy of having a place in their creed. They all commend themselves to our honest convictions of truth and right ; we have but to state them truly, and we may safely make the appeal to all intelligent beings, if they are not conformed to human reason.

The sovereign right of God to give *law* to his

creatures, belongs to him from his original and undivided supremacy. Reason decides intuitively, that it is the prerogative of a superior to give law to his inferiors. This is the prerogative of all civil rulers, whatever be the form of government under which this prerogative is exercised. And if men, who have no natural, but only a borrowed, delegated and conventional supremacy, possess this right, much more does the Infinite God possess it, who is by nature supreme, and whose power, wisdom, goodness and rectitude qualify him, and him alone, to be the universal Lawgiver.

The doctrine of *human apostacy* is rather *stated* and illustrated in the Bible, than *revealed*; for the history of man demonstrates it; human reason, however reluctantly, confesses it to be true; and though she strives to view it in more flattering lights than those in which the Scriptures represent it, she is constrained to behold it in all its ugliness, and in the dark shadows of scriptural truth. The consequent ill desert of man is an unavoidable inference from his sinfulness, deduced as certainly by reason as by the Scriptures. Reason decides, that no wise and good lawgiver may overlook the violations of his law. There is no such thing as law without an expressed, or implied penalty. The force and sanction of law consist in penalty, and without it the lawgiver has no authority. Conscience, too, everywhere recognizes man's ill desert as the consequence of his sin; and no sooner does he sin, than there arises in his bosom a sense of ill desert, and an

indestructible conviction of his obnoxiousness and obligation to punishment.

Men in all ages of the world have adopted the principle, that the wrath of Heaven must be appeased for past offences. Their altars and their sacrifices, with one voice, bear testimony to the necessity of some propitiatory libations to the offended Deity. What, then, is there unreasonable in the method of *redemption* by Jesus Christ? Reason surely does not divest the Supreme Lawgiver of his pardoning power. Every lawgiver has a *natural* right to exercise this prerogative; and he has also a *moral* right to exercise it, wherever it can be done without conflicting with the best interests of the government. Whether the Great Lawgiver could wisely and rightfully exercise the pardoning power, through the mediation of another, who should himself make satisfaction to Divine justice, is a question for the discretion, the wisdom, the rectitude of the Lawgiver to decide. He has decided it in favor of such a commutation of punishment, as shall rescue the guilty without destroying the innocent substitute. That there should be no act of injustice to the substitute, everything on his part is perfectly voluntary. And that there should be no injustice to the government, the substitute himself is of such high consideration in the court of heaven, that the ends of justice are not trifled with, but fully answered by his substitution in the place of the guilty. Now, why should human reason revolt at this? Remote as it is from the ordinary apprehensions of mankind, does not

reason decide that very important ends are gained by it, which could not have been gained by the absolute and sovereign exercise of the dispensing power? Are there not manifestations of love and goodness which could not have been made without it? Is not such a procedure more conducive to the ends of justice, more expressive of the evil of sin, better adapted to strengthen veneration for the law and promote the interests of good government, than either the sealed and certain ruin of the entire race, or the arbitrary exercise of the pardoning power without any atonement for transgression? Human governments cannot exist without the great principle of representation; the parent represents his child, the guardian his ward; moneyed associations their constituents: why should this arrangement be impugned in the Divine government? Men forgive for the love of another; and so does God. Human governments remit penalty through the intercession of men of merit, men in power, and men of high and commanding influence; and so does God, through the intercession of his Son. Men accept the responsibility of one man for the defalcations of another; and so does God. Men receive an amendment for wrong, freely offered by another than the wrongdoer; and so does God. If the Roman Fabius, when condemned to death by the dictator, was pardoned because the Roman people implored that he might find mercy for their sakes, what is there unreasonable in the fact, that sinners of our race should be forgiven for the sake of Christ? If the rigid execution

of the penalty had been ruinous to the entire race, and clemency thus exercised would give authority to the Divine government, why should reason oppose such a method of mercy? Why may not the Divine government accept some competent substitute, if some kinsman Redeemer can be found, who is too much the friend of justice to see sin go unpunished, and who is, at the same time, too much the friend of man to see him sink under the stroke of justice? Why, I demand, may not such a substitute be accepted, when he not only freely offers himself to bear the mighty burden, but is able to bear it; and from the low grave, to which it crushes him, to rise with new laurels on his brow, with his rescued victims on his breast, penetrated by his love, reformed and restored, loyal subjects of the Divine kingdom, affectionate and dutiful children of the Divine family? Is this an unreasonable redemption? Were all the wisdom of angels and men collected in one vast assembly, to scrutinize this method of mercy, with all its wonders, could its reasonableness be challenged, or its fitness be called in question, or its moral influence impugned

This great truth is connected in the Scriptures *with the provision they make for the personal holiness and sanctification of the fallen.* And what is there in this that is unreasonable? Is it not a fact, that creatures depraved and degenerate as men are, *need* a radical transformation of character in order to be happy? Reason and philosophy urge the necessity of this change, as well as the Bible.

Is it the decision of the Bible, that *no means and no motives are effectual for the production of this change*? Such is the rigid conclusion of reason and experience, as well as the decision of the Bible.

Is it the decision of the Bible, that *the Author of this change is God himself*? Why should he not be? Does reason decide that he renews the face of the earth, and crowns the year with his goodness; that he opens his hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing; that he is the Father of the rain, and begetteth the drops of the dew; and does it question if he is the Author of a spiritual character in fallen man? Does reason decide that every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from the Father of lights, and that this highest and best gift has no such divine origin?

Or is it the decision of the Scriptures, that *this heaven-imparted holiness is the fruit of the Saviour's death*, and that it is his love which constrains men to cease from their hostility to God, and to return to his Father, and their Father, in his name? Is it unreasonable that this Great Sufferer should have some reward—some fitting recompense? And what so fitting, so reasonable, as to have gained the objects of his redemption, and when once gained, that “nothing should pluck them out of his hand?”

We will not pursue this specification of particular truths. They are all of a piece. Human reason need not take the alarm; she may be satisfied with them. The understanding, the conscience, the heart, the whole soul may be satisfied with them, as every

way worthy of God, as furnishing the highest proof of his wisdom and love, as reading the most instructive and striking lessons to the universe, as announcing glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will to men. There is no folly, no weakness, no wildness, nor extravagance here. Wondrous as these truths are, they are too intelligible to be irrational; too rational not to interest the strongest intellect. There is a simplicity and grandeur in them that rebut all the cavils of a cold and sceptical rationalism, and carry conviction to thoughtful minds that they are of God. They make common cause with all that is intelligent in the universe. They form as truly the religion of philosophers, as of the common people. Some of the greatest minds the world has known, minds as vigorous and well-furnished, minds which science has been proud to honor, have revelled in the truths of the Bible, and been its triumphant defenders against all the invasion of its malignant foes. So far from being a shallow system, or making any claims on the credulity of men, it sounds the note of alarm against all belief on slight evidence, and is sure to gratify, by every fresh demand it makes upon human intelligence.

If from the truths of Christianity, we pass to the consideration of *the duties* it enjoins, we shall find that these also are founded in the highest reason. With the exception of its positive institutions, they are all founded in the nature of the Deity, in the nature of man, and in the relations which he sustains towards God and his fellow men. There is no form

of iniquity, be it open excess, or hidden wickedness, on which it does not frown. In every conflict between right and wrong, however the wrong may be sanctioned by custom, influence, or law, it is always found on the right side. It has the only strong hold in the universe upon the morals of individual men, and upon the moral sense and habits of human society. It silently inweaves itself with all the relations of social and public life, everywhere proclaiming the laws of rectitude in the ears of the prince and the peasant. It has no pious frauds ; no fabulous, or magic power ; no falsehoods, by which the terrors of superstition are excited, or allayed ; but urges all its obligations simply by the authority and love of its Author, and the allurements of its truths. It regulates the outward conduct by first regulating the heart, and implanting in the inner man the fear of God and the love of Jesus Christ. It diminishes what is imaginary, and gives power and prominence to what is real ; it throws into the background the vanities of time, and brings forward in bold relief the realities of eternity. It controls, not by impulse and passion, but by the strength of principle.

The duties it prescribes are all intelligible, comprehensively expressed, and easily remembered. Nor is there one of them that is not right in itself, and of the happiest tendency. It requires men to love that which is lovely, and hate that which is odious ; to neglect the unimportant, and pursue the important. It enforces every obligation of dependence and

gratitude, of nature and of law. It gives its sanction to everything which reason sanctions. Reason instinctively revolts at every violation of its laws, as an unnatural perversion of what is right. Any other system of duties would at once be felt to be irrational. Notwithstanding all the power which sin exerts over the human mind, in spite of itself, human reason recoils from any moral direction different from that given to it by Christianity.

There is a great difference between the happiness enjoyed with the approbation of conscience, and that which is felt without, or against it. There is, no doubt, pleasure in sinning: the hope of unlawful gratification constitutes the fatal charm. But there is an immense abatement of this happiness, arising from remorse and fear: the consciousness of guilt often grows to such intensity, as more than to counteract all the pleasure. This is the moral arrangement of the Bible; and can there be an arrangement more reasonable, more wise? The language of such an arrangement is, that its Author, solicitous as he is for the happiness of men, is mainly solicitous that they should be happy through the possession of a virtuous, moral character; and that their happiness itself should be the fruit and one of the expressions of their excellence.

I ask, then, if Christianity be not accordant with human reason? May not the man of this world deem it the proudest eminence to which his reason can aspire, to sit at the feet of this heavenly Teacher, and bow without gainsaying to its every decision?

It is only false and corrupted reason that fears the Bible, or that the Bible frowns upon. It inculcates no unreasonable doctrine, insists on no unreasonable duty, aims at no unreasonable end. It forms the most rational and consistent scheme of belief, and morals, and hopes.

Let it be compared with the systems of ancient philosophy, and no doubt can remain as to which is accordant with reason. Let it be compared with the fictions of paganism; with the fables of its poets, and the representations of its historians; and while, in its best forms, paganism will be found a disgrace to human reason, this wonderful Book will be found to be no dishonor to the intelligence of the "God only wise." Thousands of years rolled over the pagan world, and its most gigantic minds in vain attempted to invent a religion which reason could approve. Never was experiment more fairly, or more fully made; never was failure more complete. Reason covers her face, and retires ashamed from the inspection.

With very little pretext may men boast of their reason, who reject the Bible. The more this book is read, and the better it is understood, the more rational will it appear. If men of lofty intellect have disbelieved it, it was not owing to their superior intelligence. Intelligence—enlightened, unbiassed intelligence—cannot see that to be irrational which is not so. On a multitude of subjects, the reason of these very men has been satisfied with a tithe of the evidence that establishes the reasona-

bleness of the Scriptures. That there are instances in which intelligent men have rejected it from the want of evidence which to them is *inaccessible*, it is very difficult to believe, so long as the Bible itself is accessible.

With the Bible in their hands, men may be safely left to the sound deductions of reason. To one of two results reason will lead them. Legitimately followed, it will make them Christians, or Atheists. If the Bible is not from God, I see not what is from him. An inadequate cause is no cause. I believe there is a God, because I find in the world such a book as the Bible: demonstrate to me that this book is not of God, and I cannot stop short of blank Atheism. God lives in vain, if he has not spoken in the Bible—or rather, he does not live—there is no God! Away, away with this thought of blasphemy! “The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock!” There is reality, there is truth, there is reason in this Book of God. “Call now, if there be any to answer thee; and to what other wilt thou turn?”

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

IF there be the weight in the preceding considerations which we attach to them, the Bible is not of man, but the work of God. Penned as it was by men, with powers and passions like our own, yet was it not in the "words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." In tracing, in the foregoing imperfect argument, those developements of a cause which is more than human, may we not affirm, "This is the finger of God!" Every distinct consideration has its separate degree of importance; while, in the aggregate, they form a moral argument in favor of Divine Inspiration, which I trust may be regarded as deserving a place in the considerations of reflecting men.

1. There are many thoughts on which it would be pleasant to dwell in this concluding chapter, the first of which relates to *the nature and importance of the argument from the Bible itself*. The thought of living within the empire of the God of heaven, without any clearer indications of his mind and will, as to our duty and final destination, than are furnished by the lights of reason and nature, ceases to be painful, only when it is forgotten and lost

sight of. The more it is present to the mind, and the more it is dwelt upon, the more it is full of agony. It is no marvel, that some of the wiser and more thoughtful heathen of antiquity expressed the hope, that the time would come when light would dawn from heaven, and dissipate the darkness and uncertainty that enveloped them.

A revelation from God is indispensably necessary to make known his will. The only question is, Where is this revelation contained? We affirm that it was given at various times and in diverse ways; and that it was finally committed to writing, and is contained in what are called the Books of the Old and New Testaments. We maintain, that since the completion of this volume all immediate revelations from God have ceased; and that there is no immediate revelation of his will, except that which is here expressed.

We mean by *inspiration*, in the first place, that we have things here revealed that are directly matters of faith; and that with respect to these, both the matter and the words were inspired, and the writers of them are very justly called the amanuenses of the Holy Ghost. In the next place, we have revelations of Scripture facts handed down by written tradition, and collected from other authentic sources, to which the writers were divinely directed, and in the presentation of which they were enabled, by the Divine Spirit, to distinguish the false from the true. And in the third place, we have a revelation of things, or facts directly perceived—seen and heard by the

writers themselves; and in recording which the Divine Spirit assisted their memories, so that they could put down what they did really see and hear. In one word, the God of heaven has given such a direction to the writers of this volume, that he is responsible for the Book itself.

The proof that this record is the word of God, is principally of two sorts; external, and internal: the first is testimony drawn from facts, and not immediately from the Bible; the second is evidence drawn directly from the Bible itself. This internal evidence, or the evidence found exclusively within the book itself, is separate from the external, and forms a distinct topic of consideration. So far as it regards our argument, it matters not who wrote the sacred Books, or whether they were received as inspired at the time when they first made their appearance; our object has been to show that the writers of them, whoever they may have been, were inspired men.

The process is a simple one by which we ascertain what are the works of God, and what is the work of man. There are works which can be performed only by the Infinite and Omnipotent Creator. We have but to look upon them, and we know that they are his: our conclusion is one which it is not in the power of a sane mind to resist. The human mind cannot conceive them to be the work of man. We think it has been shown that this is true of the Bible; that it is a production that never could have had man for its author: the supposed cause is inade-

quate to the effect. There is no other book, that man might not have written—this is the work of God, proved to be such by the same evidence as proves that the sun in the firmament was brought into existence by his creative power. We look at the sun, and *know* that man could not have created it; we inspect the Bible, and our convictions are equally strong, that no unaided human pen could have written those wondrous pages. The substance of our argument in favor of its divine origin is just this, and nothing more. A thinking man, shipwrecked on a desolate island, and who knows nothing about this Book save what the Book itself contains, when once he understands it, and feels its power, could not resist the conviction that it is what it claims to be—the word of God.

If God has revealed his will to men, he must have associated with *that revelation itself* convincing evidence of its divine origin. There must be marks upon it that indicate its celestial birth. The strength of the argument in favor of its heavenly parentage, must be in the Book itself, rather than in anything which is out of it—in those internal indications which it bears of its Divine Author, rather than in those external processes by which it may be traced to the heaven whence it came. The human mind requires stronger proof of its superhuman origin, than any such historical research can furnish. However strong those convictions of its divine authority which are produced by an induction of the historical argument, those convictions are stronger

which result from an inspection of the Scriptures themselves. We do not deem it enough, that the sacred writers themselves profess to be inspired ; this is important testimony, but, aside from what they wrote, it is not decisive ; and it is only in connection with what they wrote, that it is entitled to confidence. On a question where such momentous interests are at stake, we may look for the best evidence which the nature of the case admits. And what is this, if not the Book itself ? If the Book itself does not discover the hand of God, nor utter the voice of God, nor reveal the heart of God, there is no testimony whatever that it is not the work of man. Just as holy men of old, when God revealed himself to them by the ministry of angels, or by audible voices, or in visions, or by Urim and Thummim, had the unwavering assurance that he himself spoke to them, and not another, may men have the conviction that it is God himself, and not another, who addresses them in his word. It must, in the nature of the case, be a self-authenticated revelation. It is with grateful admiration of the condescending goodness of God, that we contemplate the fact, that he has rendered the evidence of divine inspiration accessible to those, who, although they cannot read extensively, can and do read the Bible, and discover in it indubitable evidence of its heavenly source. This is emphatically the argument of the unlearned—the *poor man's argument*—hidden peradventure “from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes.”

It often happens that many who are first in human learning, are last in the knowledge of God. The religion of the Bible is the religion of the multitude; not the religion of the schools. A babe in Christ discovers in it what is never discovered by the pride and vanity of human learning, however great its originality and profoundness of research. The schools of pagan philosophy were among its earliest and most virulent opposers, because it obscured their literary fame, and shook the proud fabric of their intellectual ambition. "I cannot dispute for Christ," said a heroic female martyr, "but I can die for him." Those who live by the Bible, can die by the Bible: though amid burning fires, they repose upon its promises as on a bed of roses, while, amid the fragrance of its unearthly atmosphere, their spirits return to him who gave them.

The time was, when men of learning and men of faith gave greater prominence to this inherent evidence, than to the external testimony. I know not from what causes it has happened—unless it be that the defenders of Christianity have been driven to the effort by the learning and researches of infidelity, as well as stimulated by an honest consciousness of thier own superior learning and researches—that such prominence has been given by Christian writers to this latter department of inquiry. The principal writers in favor of a supernatural revelation, more especially since the attacks made upon it by Hume and Gibbon, have directed their attention mainly to this external testimony. In so doing, they have not

only been successful, but triumphant; the battery of the enemy has been silenced, and the strong fastnesses in which he trusted taken by storm. So far as my information extends, Lardner, Michaelis, Jones, Paley, Chalmers and Stuart, to say nothing of others, have furnished a mass of historical testimony to which infidels have not ventured to give anything which they themselves consider a reply: it stands unassailed—a conclusive refutation of the cavils of infidelity derived from historical sources.

Yet after all that may be said in favor of the historical argument, it is the argument from the Book itself which most crowds the system of infidelity. A distinguished infidel, when once asked, “How is it, that the Bible is so far superior to all other books that it can be read over and over, a thousand times, and still retain all its freshness;” and “why no other book like it was ever written?” replied, “Because there is not room in the world for two such books!” Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, the author of three distinguished treatises in opposition to Christianity, and whom Dr. Leland, in his “View of Deistical Writers,” declares to be “the most eminent of them that had appeared in England;” urges in his volume, *De Religione Laici*, this strong objection against the historical argument: “that in order to arrive at any certainty in these matters, it would be necessary for the common people either to learn all languages, to read all the celebrated writers, and to consult all those learned men that have not written—a method which is manifestly absurd and impracticable—or else to

have recourse to a supreme judge of controversies, appointed by common consent." *Fas est ab hoste doceri.* There is great weight in these concessions, coming as they do from infidel lips.

The argument from the Bible itself will also, if I mistake not, be found to be that on which the champions for the historical argument do themselves place the greatest reliance. It was eminently true of the Reformers, that they wrote on this subject like men instructed out of the Bible. That God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his word, and that the Scriptures carry with them a self-evidencing power, was the teaching of Calvin, of Stapfer, of Vanmastricht, of Witsius, of Turretin, of Owen, of Beveridge, of Baxter, and a multitude of others who were the most successful defenders of Christianity. The doctrine of the Presbyterian church, beautifully and even eloquently expressed in her standards, is in the following language: "The heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole which is to give glory to God, the full discovery which it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly *evidence itself* to be the word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." It will be recollected

also, that the Scriptures themselves, in addition to the argument from miracles and prophecy, largely insist on this department of evidence. They make their appeal to themselves: they challenge men to “search them,” to “prove them.” The evidence is not far off, because the “word is nigh.” The light which they display declares by its own luminousness its Mighty Author:

—————“Some great Maker,
In goodness and in power præëminent.”

2. Another thought has reference to *those who reject the divine authority of the Sacred Writings*. The infidel affirms that this Book is not from God. What are his reasons for this bold and unsupported assertion? Is it, that the book itself is not wise enough to have God for its author?—or that it is not sufficiently kind and benevolent?—or that it is an unholy book?—or that its doctrines are such that they must, or might have been the commandments of men?—or that its religion bears too strong a resemblance to those of man’s devising?—or that its revelations are inconsistent and contradictory?—or that its system of truth, and duty, and salvation, are not fitted to a race fallen by their iniquity, soon to die, and their immortal spirit to return to the God who gave it?—or that experience shows that it has no dwelling in the bosoms of the men to whom its truths, its promises, and its blessed hopes are directed?—or that it is an outrage upon reason and common sense? We have endeavored to make it appear, that the con-

verse of all these strange hypotheses is the only position that can be substantiated by all ingenuous and fair reasoning. The burden of proof, we confess, does not lie in the first instance upon the infidel, to show that this Book is not divinely inspired : it lies upon believers in it to show that it is so. But it should startle the unbeliever, that he finds it so herculean a task to *prove* that it is *not* so. It should at least lead him to doubt of his infidelity ; to question if he be not building upon a false foundation ; to look around him, and see if he has any foundation to stand upon save empty air.

It is impossible for him to *know* that the Scriptures are *not* the word of God ; and it is very possible for him to know that they are his word. There is a strange fatality attending a certain class of men, in soberly persuading themselves that this Book is an imposture, or is more likely to turn out an imposture, because they themselves reject it. It requires but a single flash of thought, or rather a single flash of conscience, to dissipate this delusion, and to discover the dense folds of darkness with which such a mind enwraps itself.

Upon the sceptic's own showing, his own conclusions are doubtful. He is not *sure* that the volume he rejects is not the word of the Living God. And what a fearful, what a tremendous state of mind is this, to be entertained for an hour—to be persisted in, to carry up to the chamber where he dies, to attend him to his hereafter, and there to melt away and be dissolved under the strong and steady light

of eternity, till it is transmuted and transformed into absolute, perfect despair !

Infidels would do well to look somewhat into the causes of their unbelief, and to institute a rigid scrutiny into the variety of concurrent circumstances, some, or all of which have contributed to that state of mind, and that cast of moral feeling, which has arrayed them against a Book so full of light and love. Is it that their reason is scandalized by it ? or is it that their pride is wounded, and that their desire of intellectual distinction, and their boasted superiority over the common opinions of mankind, are humbled ? Is it their benevolence that the Bible offends, and have they persuaded themselves, that their notions are of any great importance to the present and future well-being of their fellow men ? Is it their piety that is offended ; and is it that their own system draws the cords of moral obligation closer and tighter than the Bible, and gives a negligent conscience less repose, and more abundantly multiplies the inducements to practical godliness ? Is it their love of truth that is assailed by this Book of God, and is it solely for the truth's sake that they oppose its claims ? An honest reply to these and similar inquiries, might reveal causes of unbelief, of the existence and power of which the unbeliever himself is not fully conscious. Such a reply were a truthful comment on the declaration, "Light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because *their deeds are evil.*"

There is no need of reminding infidels of the

obligations they are under to a character corresponding to the claims of their infidelity. We take leave to recommend to them to make less of their speculations, and more of their character and conduct, as the safest and surest way of coming at a satisfactory and tranquil conclusion of the great inquiry, Whether the Bible be, or be not, of divine origin. Amid the advantages and privileges of a Christian land, it is impossible for them to shut out the light, or disclaim the solemn and affecting obligations in which they are involved. If there were nothing but their *access* to the Sacred Scriptures, this privilege alone is sufficient to leave them without excuse. Let them but deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; and there will be an end to their infidelity. Let them seek light from the Father of lights, and love from the God of love; let them be punctual and devout in the duties of religion; and their night of darkness will be superseded by a bright and cheerful day. Let them exemplify the moral influence of the truth, in their internal spirit and external deportment; let them do God's will; and they shall know of the doctrine of the Bible, whether it be of God, or the device of an impostor. It requires no sacrifice of truth for them to make this experiment; no compromise of principle, no wrong, or even unphilosophical concessions.

It is not hazarding much to assert, that the firmest and most intrepid and inflexible advocate of infidelity will find little room for doubt, when he

once consents thus to prove and bring to a practical test the truth of God's holy word. Experience shows that the opposite course is the true way to make infidels, and to confirm them in their infidelity. Men reason themselves from a Scriptural to a loose Christianity, from early imbibed religious principles to those that are irreligious, from an intellectual conviction of the divine origin of the Scriptures to an utter rejection and contempt of them, by the strong and irrepressible desire to relax the bonds of moral obligation, and to sin without remorse and apprehension. They first reason themselves into doubt and uncertainty, and then into absolute infidelity, because they are hostile to the truth, and dread the sense of responsibility which the truth imposes.

“Virtue could see to do what virtue would
By her own radiant light.
He that has light within his own clear breast,
May sit in the centre, and enjoy bright day;
But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun:
Himself is his own dungeon.”

It is a fact of great importance to be discovered and appreciated, that wickedness, in every form and degree, has a tendency to obscure the light of truth, and diminish the force, both of the internal evidence and the external testimony by which the truth is supported. “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” Nor is it any marvel,

when we consider the rectitude of God's government, that he should send upon such persons "strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but *have pleasure in unrighteousness.*"

3. Another remark suggested by the kind of evidence on which our argument has rested, relates to a *long-cherished, oft-repeated, and most unwarrantable doctrine of the church of Rome, in regard to the authority of the Sacred Writings.* Among the many Roman Catholic principles the influence of which ought to be counteracted, is the bold assertion, that the fact that the Bible is the word of God rests upon the testimony of the Papal church; and that the canonical authority of the sacred Books is proved and handed down from her alone, as the infallible oracle. In all the principal controversies between Protestants and Romanists, both in Europe and in this country, her high boast is, that the appeal of Protestants to the Bible is a virtual appeal to *her*; because, as she is pleased to say, it is by her decisions that the various books which compose it were ascertained to belong to the divine record.

There is so little force in this reasoning, or rather in this statement, that it scarcely deserves to be called sophistry. For the sake of argument, let this claim be conceded. It does not follow, that the divine origin of the Scriptures rests upon her decision; nor that her decision does anything more than indicate where the inspired books are to be found. What if the Council of Trent had first invented the

mariner's compass ; it would not follow that the tendency of the magnetic needle to the pole depends on her invention. A certain mathematician of Greece produced the evidence, that in any triangle the sum of all the angles is equal to two right angles ; but it does not follow that the Grecian philosopher originated this truth, and that the angles specified were not equal to two right angles before. If the Papal church has decided correctly what books belong to the Sacred Writings, it was upon evidence that existed independently of her decision, and because they were antecedently of divine origin. She did not assign to them their high origin:—that they would have possessed, even though discarded by Rome. When by an induction of facts she satisfied herself that God had already given them that high place and character, she announced her conviction and her decision to the world. The fact itself, that God has given a revelation of his will, was a fact before she announced her conviction of it ; her conviction rested on the fact, and not the fact on her conviction or decree. Rome was never more at fault than in this pretension to argument. She first proves the authority of the church of Rome from the Scriptures, and then the authority of the Scriptures from the church of Rome. Both claims cannot be valid. For if the authority of Rome depends upon the Scriptures, the authority of the Scriptures does not depend upon Rome ; or, if the authority of the Scriptures depends upon Rome, the authority of Rome does not depend upon the Scriptures.

But this is not all we have to suggest against these arrogant claims. If the argument for the divine origin of the Scriptures which has been presented is a valid one, its claims do not in any degree rest upon the decisions of Rome, but upon the inherent evidence of the Book itself. We may respect the decisions of councils in this matter, but we do not need them. We see that this Book is the word of God for ourselves; we have a right, independently of Rome, independently of all the world, to examine and judge of the evidence by which its divine origin is supported. When, with a right spirit, we inspect the Book itself, our perceptions of its superhuman origin are absolutely irresistible. A child of five years might as well be supposed to have been the architect of Solomon's temple, as any uninspired man, or set of men to have been the authors of the Holy Bible. Compared with the productions of the unlettered fishermen and tent-makers of Judea, the greatest productions of the human mind on religious subjects were like the earth when it was without form and void, in contrast with this fair creation as it rose in order and beauty at the command of its Creator. When we read the Scriptures, we discover in them that of which human wisdom, human goodness, human purity were not the authors. In an age when there are not wanting those who would undermine the deep foundations of confidence in God's word, and for its own intrinsic and superhuman excellence substitute the decisions of men, we have deemed the argument which has been presented in

the preceding pages, not out of place. With the men who now live, and those who come after us, the struggle with Rome is not over. The turning point in the controversy with her respects the word of God, as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Without the internal evidence of its divine origin, Rome might have the vantage ground ; with this evidence, the vantage ground is ours.

4. Another subject on which the preceding argument may legitimately have an important bearing, *respects the province of reason in all matters of religious faith*. We have no quarrel with those who advocate the right of private judgment. It belongs to man, from the constitution of his intellectual and moral nature. The faculty of judgment was given in order to be exercised ; the right to exercise it is implied in the exhibition of all the evidences by which the truth is established ; it is implied in the doctrine of personal responsibility, and in the nature of religion as a personal thing ; divine revelation itself makes an appeal to it ; while for the exercise of it men are accountable to God alone. “To their own Master they stand, or fall. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant ?” But while we say these things, we are not to forget, that thinking error to be truth does not make it truth ; and that it is only when men come to right conclusions, that they may not only think they are right, but know themselves to be so. The Holy Scriptures are the only safe directory. Antiquity cannot guide us ; for if it does, it is quite as likely

to lead us into error as into truth. Tradition cannot guide us ; it is too intangible and indefinite—we know not where to look for it. Human reason, with all her boasted powers, and all her rights of private judgment, cannot guide us—she herself needs a guide.

We do not deny, that human reason has its appropriate province in every question of religious truth ; but its limits are reduced to the single effort of ascertaining what God has revealed. It is not a teacher, but a pupil : its province is not to dictate, but to learn, and submit to the dictates of unerring wisdom : its proper employment is, not to decide what the word of God ought to contain, but simply to find out what it does contain. It is absolutely shut up to the binding force of instructions revealed from heaven. No matter how fearlessly men come to the word of God, so long as they come honestly ; not to pronounce judgment on what God has revealed, but to form their judgment by the divine testimony. I said, no matter how fearlessly : perhaps the language is too strong. “The meek will he guide in judgment ; the meek will he teach his way.” The understanding is darkened by sin ; and it were no marvel, if the inspired writers do not pay the profoundest homage to human wisdom. “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law,” is the most reasonable language in the world for man who is a worm. It is the true characteristic of a great mind. The truest and the profoundest reasoner on religious subjects is the truest and the pro-

foundest listener to the teachings of heavenly truth. You may not alter; you may not expunge; you may not supply; you may not wrest from its true import a single truth which God, the Lord, has uttered. "If I, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, let him be accursed!" Here reason may rest with confidence, as the ultimate ground of authority. Desert this record, and all is the darkness of midnight—the abyss of Atheism. Reason is no longer rational than she is satisfied with a record that has the endorsement, the seal and superscription, of Eternal wisdom.

5. Another remark from the preceding discussion, relates to a *common error of modern Rationalists*. There is a class of minds, in which the spirit of inquiry supersedes the love of truth. Truth already attained holds a less important place in their estimation than that which is doubtful and sought after. Whether there be more of egotism than the love of truth in this state of mind, they who cherish it can perhaps best decide. It is no uncommon thing to boast of light that is new, when it is only new *to us*; while the incense that is offered on the altar of a proud and self-complacent egotism, may indicate the ignorance, as well as the vanity of the worshipper.

The love of investigation merely, where it is not under the influence of a humble and docile spirit, is much more likely to give the thoughts a wrong, than a right direction. There are those who are "ever learning, and never come to the knowledge

of the truth." They live upon intellectual excitement, rather than upon intellectual gratification. "If," says the German philosopher Lessing—"if God held in his closed right hand *all truth*, and in his left the single, *ever active impulse after truth*, though with the condition that I should wander in continual error, and should say, Speak; choose! I would humbly point to the left hand and say, Father, give:—pure truth is for thee alone!" There is ensnaring beauty in such a representation as this, and there is seeming modesty; while in reality it is but an ingenious, though transparent covering of a heart that "loves darkness rather than light." Such is the sceptic's love of truth, but not the Christian's. The intellectual excitement fostered by doubt, hesitation and inquiry, is not enough for him. To think, to search, to be "driven about by every wind of doctrine," is not enough for him. It is not the labor merely, but the fruit that he desires: it is not intellectual excitement, but intellectual repose: it is not doubt that he is seeking after, but certainty. He is a lover of *truth*—that never alters. If he can but learn the truth, he will listen thoughtfully to it, in whatever guise it approaches him. He will sit humbly at the feet of his Divine Teacher, or gather it from the lips of babes. A *single truth*, stamped with the impress of Heaven, outweighs with him all the vain pride of the mere philosopher and rationalist in his researches. The spirit of inquiry is not one which he wishes to see suppressed, or even embarrassed; but he would that it were always wisely

directed, and made subservient to truth. And where can it be indulged so freely, where is there such scope for it, as in "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God?" God has wisely bestowed upon us this ever active impulse after truth, but with no condition that leads us to error. Nay : while he opens his left, he also opens his right hand, dispensing with exuberant bounty truth, pure truth, from the eternal habitation where he dwells.

The thought has more than once been suggested, that the evidence by which the divine origin of the Sacred Writings is established, is, after all, nothing more than that which results from the *manifold combination of strong probabilities* in its favor. The writer well remembers the impression which this thought made upon his own mind in early life, when he first met with it in a published discourse of a justly celebrated theologian of our country. "No Christian," says this writer, "*can certainly know* that the Gospel itself is of divine inspiration." It were no marvel if this single remark, as dangerous as it is unwarranted, had made as many unbelievers, as the able and unanswerable discourses of the same author on "The Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy" have made believers. Whatever depends on probable evidence only, can never produce the conviction of *certainty*. The most that can be said of all propositions of this sort is, that there is a *strong probability* in their favor ; and that they are rather suspended over the fancy as an airy vision, than recognized as immutable truth. I confess I shudder at the thought

that we have no higher evidence in favor of the divine origin of the Scriptures. Is it so? Is it so, that nothing more can be affirmed of the divine legation of Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, than that it is *in a very high degree probable*? Is it no more than probable that there was such a personage as Jesus Christ, “who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification?” Did Paul reason thus, when he said, “I *know* whom I have believed?” Did John reason thus, when he said, “We *know* that when he shall appear, we shall be like him?” Perish all such scepticism as this! Trust it, who may; but God forbid that the faith of his people should rest on such a questionable basis! The highly respected and venerable author himself, to whom we have just referred, in defiance of his theory, could not help contradicting it, whenever his own ardent and strong mind kindled with the importance and responsibility of his theme. Comparing Christianity with infidel philosophy, he says, “Here is no *uncertainty*, no *wavering*, no tossing on the billows of anxiety, no plunging into the gulf of despair; your path is a straight and beaten way, and were you way-faring men and fools, you need not err therein.”

Every proposition within the circle of moral science, is either certainly true, or certainly false: otherwise we know, and can know nothing about it. We may conjecture much, and hope much; we may be strongly persuaded; but we *know* absolutely nothing: our minds must necessarily be in that state

of suspense which is the medium between absolute certainty and absolute unbelief. And this state of suspense admits of as many degrees as there are between the lowest and highest probability. If such were the basis of our reasoning in regard to the divine origin of the Sacred Writings, it would be impossible for us absolutely to affirm, or deny the truth on this great question. We might have a prevailing opinion one way or the other, which approaches the nearest step to certainty ; but we must still have some degree of doubt. There is nothing desirable in such a state of mind as this on any subject ; much less on the great subject involved in the preceding discussion. Unless it be from a strong desire to divest himself of all moral obligation, or from a vain desire of intellectual distinction, or from the dread of credulity, or from the love of error, no man ever prefers ignorance to knowledge, doubt to certainty. On some subjects there is no necessity for such a state of mind, because there is no foundation in the nature of the subjects themselves for uncertainty. Nor is there any foundation for uncertainty in the nature of the subject we have been considering. The proposition that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are of divine origin, is either true, or false—it is either *certainly* true, or *certainly* false. It cannot *in its own nature* be a doubtful question. It may be doubtful in the mind of the inquirer ; but it is not so in itself, and in reality. There is truth and certainty on this subject, as well as every other, and nothing but truth and

certainty. The admission of the opposite hypothesis unsettles the whole subject; nor can those who admit such an hypothesis, gain anything more than to keep truth and certainty at a distance from their own minds, and the minds of others, for a time only. Certainty exists, and it is impossible to reason it out of existence; while every effort to do so is as logically absurd as it is practically unwise.

It is certainty that we have been seeking in the foregoing pages. We hope we have sought it honestly and modestly. But we have no desire to disguise the fact that we have sought it. Those who doubt on this subject, do so where there is no room for doubting. No man is called on to believe that the Bible is not of man, merely because there is a strong preponderance of probabilities that man was not its author.

6. We may not overlook, in these concluding observations, the *great importance of established principles on all religious subjects*. The truth cannot be too often repeated, nor too deeply felt, that *men are no better than their principles*. There are exceptions to the remark, that where a man's principles are good, his character is good; but it is always true, that where his principles are bad, his character is bad. Right principles lie at the foundation of moral obligation. No man is one thing in his principles, and another, and the opposite, in his sense of duty. Conscience is governed by light and truth; and just so far as the character is controlled by conscience, it is controlled by principles. The character of men has its sources and foundation. The principles of a man

lie at the foundation of his character, and influence his thoughts, his emotions, his conversation, his deportment. "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." Nor may they, with any more semblance of reason, look for a virtuous and good character from principles that are vicious and bad. Moral rectitude, is conformity of heart and life to truth; wickedness, is conformity to error. The devil first corrupted men, and corrupts them still, by inducing them to adopt false principles; and in all the efforts of his mercy to reclaim them, the great means which the God of truth makes use of are principles of the opposite character. In all the ordinary affairs of human life, men are controlled by their principles. The politician is controlled by his principles of government; the merchant, by his principles of commerce; the jurist, by his principles of law; the scholar, by his principles of literature and science. It is impossible that men, in the exercise of their rational faculties, and a due discretion, should be controlled in any other way.

The same may be said of principles that are religious, or irreligious. No matter when, or where, or how they are imbibed, they exert an influence; just as wheat produces wheat, or tares produce tares, whether sowed by the agriculturist, or deposited by the wind or the birds of the air. Nor is the appropriate influence, either of good or bad principles, prevented or impeded by the sincerity with which they are received; but rather secured by it, and rendered more permanent.

Nor is this abstract speculation; it is the state-

ment of facts. History, both sacred and profane, shows them to be facts ; biography shows them to be facts ; observation and consciousness demonstrate them to be veritable realities. The true character of the pagan world—the true character of the followers of Mahomet—the true character of papal Rome—of Protestantism, of Infidelity, and of Christianity, is to be traced to the respective principles of each of these distinct systems of religion. Principles are nothing without their practical nature and tendency. What is virtuous character, if not the application of virtuous principles to the heart and life ? and what constitutes vicious character, if not the application of vicious principles to the heart and life ? Good principles generate good institutions, good habits ; evil principles, those that are evil. Let good principles hold dominion over the minds of men, and virtue and true piety will progressively win their way over our lost world ; while, in the same proportion in which loose and evil principles hold dominion, will virtue languish and wickedness triumph.

And not only may this result be looked for as the natural and necessary sequence of the effect from the cause ; but it is the matter of deliberate, moral calculation. Men imbibe and cherish good principles, with the deliberate and express design of being influenced by them ; and when they pursue a wrong course of conduct, they fall back upon wrong principles to justify them. They intend to be governed by their principles, be they good or bad. No

man attributes his character to accident or contingency ; nor does he, for any considerable time, ever suppose that his principles will be ineffectual and abortive. If men act from good principles, it is because they mean to do so ; and if they act from bad principles, while they may not acknowledge that their principles are corrupt, they would rather be driven to this acknowledgment, than to the confession that they act from no principle at all. It is for the most part the deliberate purpose of men, that their principles shall affect their character and conduct. Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, and Frederic of Prussia, rejected the Christian religion ; and their object in so doing was to fortify themselves in their sworn confederacy to subvert all religion and established order, and introduce the reign of universal licentiousness. David Hume lived and died an avowed sceptic and Atheist ; and though the annals of scepticism do not furnish a more favorable example of moral reputation, his life and death show that he intended his conduct should be governed by his principles. His life was devoted to unsettling all fixed principles of belief in the human mind ; to subverting the whole system of moral obligation ; to obliterating a sense of God's authority from the conscience, and to inculcating the innocence of the greatest crimes ; while his dying hours were occupied at the card table, and the thoughts of his dying pillow devoted to his insipid raillery of the doctrine of a future state and final retribution.

The infidelity of the present age has learned a

better lesson than to hold the Bible in contempt. It is a part of its policy to award to it great excellence, a sound morality, and a benign influence on the social relations. It regards the writers of it as far in advance of their contemporaries in moral science, and as deserving higher consideration than the most eminent of ancient sages. But it does not award to it the infallibility of unerring wisdom, nor listen to it as the oracle of God. It is a more specious infidelity than that of Voltaire and Paine, but it is infidelity still. It has strong pretensions to an impartial rationalism; it has the semblance of ingenuousness and candor; it invests itself with the broad mantle of a professed charity; but it pays its court to unblushing infidelity, and reduces the Book of God to a level with the teachings of uninspired men. It has, too, a scholar-like modesty. It would not be too confident; decently suggesting, that strong and tangible proof is excluded from this sphere of religious inquiry.

Now we deem it important to possess better and more established principles on this great subject than any of these. This is not the reception the Sacred Writings demand. Their credentials are of such force and authority, as to afford no room for this hesitating state of mind. If they are a cunningly devised fable, no matter how soon, or how decidedly they are exploded; if they are true, every man ought to be satisfied of their truth, and hold them fast to the end.

We cannot appreciate too highly the importance

of firm and established principles on this great subject, and more especially in strong and well-cultivated minds. Truth is easily distinguished from error, when men are once willing to see the difference; and when they are once willing to see this, they will no longer regard it as of little consequence what they believe. "Buy the truth and sell it not," is the kind counsel of heavenly wisdom. Nothing is too dear to part with for the truth. Pride, vain reason, prejudice, interest, sloth, sin, the favor of men, are all of little worth compared with the truth of God. Buy it at any rate; part with it for nothing—not for ease, nor fame, nor gold, nor life. Love the truth, adorn the truth, honor the truth; be witnesses for the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

7. It were also a natural deduction from the series of observations presented in this volume, and not to be omitted, that *the Sacred Writings deserve the most serious and patient study, and affectionate regard*. It is the Great God who speaks to men in these writings. It is God your Maker, your Lawgiver, your Redeemer, your Judge. It is the voice of your Father who is in heaven, uttering truths which no human intellect ever conceived; dictating them by his own Spirit, and subscribing them with his own name and seal. He who inhabits eternity, and fills and occupies it as his own dwelling-place, here makes discoveries of the eternal world to the view of mortals, as momentous as the heaven where he dwells. Every other book is fiction and romance,

compared with this. If there be an altar where the human intellect may bow in profoundest reverence, and where human learning may find laurels that never wither, it is at the altar of revealed truth. These wondrous writings have done more to extend the field of human thought, than all others combined. Men of genius and learning, men who have been distinguished for superior strength of mind, for eloquence of tongue and pen, for brilliancy of imagination and acute powers of disquisition, on opening the Bible, have found themselves to be children; and been constrained to honor its ever-blessed and adorable Author.

“Learning has borne such fruit in other days
On all her branches; piety has found
Friends in the friends of science, and true prayer
Has flowed from lips wet with Castalian dews.”

Names that are the adornment of their race, and in the highest and most enlightened classes of society, have identified their ripest honors with their apologies for the Christian faith.

This one Book will live when the remembrance of all other books is passed away. It will go down through the successive generations of men; and when the earth shall be burnt up, and the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, it shall remain inscribed on the hearts of an exceeding great multitude, which no man can number. It shall go up to the bar of God, shall enter into the gates of the heavenly city, and there be hailed as the charter of

its immortal joys. Precious, precious, thrice precious Book of God! It can cheer when every other comforter is far away. It can visit the chambers of solitude, and counsel and comfort on the bed of languishing. It can soothe griefs which nothing else can soothe. It holds up the torch-light of heaven's tenderest mercy in the midst of the dark valley; it is the comforter of the otherwise comfortless, wiping away the tear that trembles in the eye which fixes its last look on things below. Who that does not deliberately purpose to live without God, and without hope; that is not prepared to seal the warrant that consigns him to a hopeless death and an undone eternity; can live in the allowed neglect of the Holy Scriptures? "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken." That man shall not lose his reward, who is a diligent and humble student of God's word. We do earnestly invite the sons and daughters of men to this rich field of thought. We bid them rove over it from flower to flower, and we bid them dig for its hidden treasures. It has running streams, and sparkling fountains, and deep wells, at which he who drinks shall find living water.

It were a fearful state of mind to believe in the divine origin of this holy Book, and neglect its great salvation. This is one of those facts in the moral history of man, which his extreme depravity alone can account for. The simple truth that *the Bible is the word of God*, one would think, were enough to rouse every man who reads it from spiritual apathy,

and fix impressions on his mind that would render him solemn as eternity. Yet is there not one of all the truths here revealed, but is sober verity. "It is even so. The God of truth declares it. There is no delusion in the Bible. No, there is no delusion in the Bible. Its great God, its holy God, its just God, its God of love and mercy, is the greatest of all realities. Its vast and immeasurable eternity, where, though millions of ages roll away, they shorten not its duration, is too an unwasting reality. Its all gracious, Almighty, and Infinite Saviour too, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

O ye, who are fallen by your iniquity, and to whom this wondrous redemption is revealed and offered in the Bible—ye, who are so insensibly and rapidly borne on the broad and rapid torrent of time to that eternity, where the friends of this Bible and this Saviour will encircle the throne, and where the enemies of this Bible and this Saviour will have lost a throne, never to be regained; is it to that blissful presence that you are bending your course? or to that mournful exile? That eternity is at no great distance; you stand upon its brink: it is but a little moment and you pass into it. Time is too short, life too precious, to disregard the counsels of this Bible, to trifle with this eternity, and this salvation. O perverse, O senseless world! that can be blinded thus, and thus infatuate, while all below is vanishing like a shadow, and there is yet an eternity to lose, or an eternity to gain!

THE END.

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